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EARTH SUMMIT '92

# The Rhetoric and The Reality In Rio

SUSANNA HECHT AND ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Missing from the agenda: economic and social justice. (Page 848)

JUN 10

EDITORIAL

## FROM HERE TO ENTROPY

The good news was the nomination, in California, of two more women senatorial candidates. Otherwise, the primary season went out in a blaze of ennui, as millions trooped to the polls to vote for candidates not of their choice. The presumptive nominees have no cause to cheer. George Bush's campaign is a shambles, his popularity is still plummeting, and he is desperately seeking a new strategy. Bill Clinton is running third, behind H. Ross Perot and Bush, in many polls. He darts left and looks right, and he pledges to redouble his efforts to "get the message across" to an unheeding electorate. But although Bush and Clinton have been bouncing around the country for five months, to ever-diminishing returns, they are still barking up the wrong tree.

Jerry Brown formulated the defining discourse of the election months ago. The "incumbent party," he said, has monopolized politics in America with money, myth and media, and it is time to break open the one-party state. Brown didn't get far himself, but all that has happened since then seems to validate his ideas.

Since the New Hampshire primary, the major parties have been decomposing like mummies suddenly exposed to air. The Republicans have lost all claim to long-sought majority status; vainly appealing to the middle class, the Democrats have disempowered traditional constituencies and destroyed their own progressive remnant. Perot is the beneficiary and at the same time pushes the process further to completion. But he hasn't the vision or the will to build a new system on the one he's helping to destroy.

NORTH VS. SOUTH
PRAFUL BIDWAI

THE STINK OF MONEY
DANIEL SINGER

PEOPLE POWER IN THAILAND
C. DOUGLAS LUMMIS

P.J. O'ROURKE IN YOUR FACE
DANNY GOLDBERG

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# LETTERS.

## TEMPTING THE TIGER

*New York City*

I hope *Nation* readers will indeed follow Elizabeth Pochoda's recommendation and read my *Vogue* review of the Eleanor Roosevelt biography—so that they may make their own judgments ["Reading Around," April 27]. In this era of political correctness one indeed tempts the orthodox tiger if one dares to confront the revisionists and to assess sexual nuances as honestly as one can.

I was aware of all this when I wrote the review. Those who are quick to shriek "Homophobia!" might better read the record. In the novels *On Keeping Women*, *The Bobby-Soxer* and *Journal from Ellipsia* my inclusive view of sexuality is clear. Three short stories deal directly with homosexuality. Forty years ago the first two ("In Greenwich There Are Many Gravelled Walks," *The New Yorker*, 1949, and "The Woman Who Was Everybody," *Mademoiselle*, 1950) were among the earliest in national magazines to treat gay characters sympathetically—or indeed at all. As such they created a stir, and I was accused of "immorality." A third story, "The Nature of the Madhouse" (*Story*, Spring 1990), is more recent.

Any sex is part of the human condition and so not immune from human observation. To insist otherwise robs it of dignity and is the true phobia. To demand that all sexual references adhere to a humorless, fawning orthodoxy is still censorship, whether it comes from the left or the right. *Hortense Calisher*

## POCHODA REPLIES

*New York City*

Pleased as I am to be charged with fawning orthodoxy in the pages of *The Nation*, political correctness had nothing to do with my finding Hortense Calisher's review hilariously homophobic. I should amend that to say that "hilarious" doesn't quite do justice to a piece that is really only curiously amusing, if disturbing. Here's how Calisher's assessment of Cook's project reads to me: Torn between giving the passages about E.R.'s passionate attachment to Lorena Hickok and other feminist friends too much attention and the danger of letting them pass into the historical record without objection, Calisher really gets her knickers in a twist. As a result she makes far more of the feminist/lesbian issue than Cook, who is mighty gingerly with the material. (That H.C. boasts of having written no less than three novels and three short stories about same-sexers only confirms my sense that she places an unusual emphasis on the subject.)

Whatever the sympathies of her fiction, Calisher is decidedly put off by a biography she thinks "flattens" E.R. by viewing her "merely from one province," i.e., the little province populated by "do gooder women" and "lesbian couples in plus fours" who formed Eleanor's political consciousness in the wake of her heartbreak over F.D.R.'s infidelities. Of course Cook does nothing of the sort; the feminists and lesbians don't figure in her story until near its end, but once they are introduced the rest of the terrain disappears for Calisher. As do Cook's credentials as a historian—Calisher is outrageous enough to suggest, as if to complete the profile of a partisan feminist, that the biographer is "censorious of men" (a charge Cook answers smartly in the current *Vogue*) and announces her preference for Joseph Lash's fawning court history, which omits the E.R./Hickok stuff altogether. I'm sure Hortense Calisher was ahead of her time when she included controversial sexual themes in her fiction, but that hasn't kept her from adopting a Not Our Sort tone in writing about a not so controversial historian. *Elizabeth Pochoda*

## MANY-HEADED HYDRO

*New York City*

Paul Webster's article "Quebec Inc. Unplugged" [April 27] provides inaccurate information. For decades the native peoples of northern Quebec and Hydro-Quebec have worked together. In 1975, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was signed by the Cree and Inuit people, federal and provincial governments and Hydro-Quebec. This document recognizes the native communities' exclusive rights to land and resources in the territory, provides an income security program for those who choose to hunt and fish for a living, and develops self-controlled boards of health and social services.

The Great Whale project, being built for the purpose of providing for the future energy needs of Quebec, is currently undergoing five environmental review processes, conducted by the Canadian and Quebec governments with full participation of the Cree and Inuit peoples. Hydro-Quebec will not proceed with any development unless all environmental studies have been completed and appropriate government permits granted. Next to conservation, hydropower is the cleanest and most reliable source of energy. Hydro-Quebec pledges to develop this precious resource with careful consideration to the environment in northern Quebec. *Jacques Guevremont*
*Hydro-Quebec*

## WEBSTER REPLIES

*New York City*

Jacques Guevremont gets lost in a thicket of self-congratulation on two topics I didn't discuss: Hydro-Quebec's relations with the natives of northern Quebec, and the sad state of the environmental assessment process. I can report that by most accounts Hydro-Quebec's relations with the Cree and the Inuit are as hostile as the environmental review process is bogus. According to Luis Eguren, a spokesman for the Grand Council of the Cree of Quebec, who spoke to me from the still-snowy coast of James Bay, the claim that Hydro-Quebec and the government of Quebec recognize the natives' "exclusive rights to land and resources" in the territory is duplicitous. This would seem self-evident, since the Cree have fought for more than twenty years to prevent hydro development on this land. The utility, ignoring human rights and the environment, is still intent on its rapacious ambitions. The Cree and Hydro-Quebec do not, and will not, "work together." As Eguren puts it, "Hydroelectric development and the Cree way of life are to a large degree incompatible."

Rather than wax truculent about how Hydro-Quebec and the governments of Quebec and Canada have betrayed the 1975 agreement, I will attend to Guevremont's grandiloquence on the subject of environmental review. He neglects to mention that the Cree spent three years in the courts before forcing the utility and the governments to conduct environmental assessments. Now, as Hydro-Quebec boasts about its environmental probity, it is doing its best to undermine the studies it commissions. Behind all this piety lies a sordid backdrop of blacklisting of scientific opponents of the projects, hasty research and the stark fact that the findings will not be binding on Hydro-Quebec. Or the Cree.

My native friends tell me they have no faith that environmental review will stop phase two of the despoliation of their homelands. Nor do they have any illusion that sensitivities to aboriginal rights will stop the Leviathan. Only consumer and investor awareness can stem the flood. We are all encouraged, however, by Guevremont's admission that conservation is the solution. Hydro-Quebec has never previously admitted this. It's learning. *Paul Webster*

## 'FREEDOM WRITER'

*Great Barrington, Mass.*

I appreciated your April 27 articles on the religious right: Joe Conason's "The Religious Right's Quiet Revival" and Frederick Clarkson's "God's Air Force." Clarkson is a columnist for "The Freedom Writer," a bimonthly newsletter I edit and publish that focuses on the activities of the Christian right. *Nation* readers who would like a copy may send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to The Freedom Writer, P.O. Box 589, Great Barrington, MA 01230. *Skipp Porteous*

## 'HUMAN QUEST'

*St. Petersburg, Fla.*

Regarding the religious right: In the May-June issue of *The Human Quest* Dr. Stephen D. Mumford, president of the Center for Research on Population and Security, recounts how a U.S. government directive "to implement the World Population Plan of Action" was breached by the Vatican. Mumford's article is available: Human Quest, 1074 23rd Avenue N., St. Petersburg, FL 33704. (A trial subscription, a year for $8, is anticipated.)

*Edna Ruth Johnson*

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# EDITORIALS.

## Opening Iraq-gate

There is nothing like the scent of blood to arouse a political animal. As George Bush sags in the polls, some Congressional Democrats are finally joining Henry Gonzalez, chairman of the House Banking Committee, and Charlie Rose, chairman of the House Administration Committee, in demanding a thorough investigation of what's become known as Iraq-gate [see "Beltway Bandits," June 1]. Well over a year after Gonzalez began revealing evidence of shenanigans concerning the Reagan and Bush administrations' prewar policy on Iraq, he has found support in the House for appointing an independent counsel.

The Iraq-gate charges center on the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro scandal (the Atlanta branch of this Italian-owned bank illegally lent $5 billion to Iraq, assisting Saddam Hussein's military buildup) and a U.S. government program that provided commodity credit guarantees to Iraq. Although hard evidence of the most serious allegation—that U.S. officials directly or indirectly participated in the diversion of commodities—has not been produced, the whole mess stinks.

Government records showing that the Commerce Department granted licenses for the export of military trucks to Iraq

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were altered to delete the military reference before they were provided to Congress. Government investigators have been less than zealous in pursuing indications of wrongdoing in the commodities program, including the possibility that U.S. commodities delivered to Iraq were traded for cash or weapons. During a House Judiciary Committee hearing, Rose maintained there is clear evidence that Iraq traded some of the agricultural supplies to Russia for military supplies. And there are questions about the Bush Administration's underhanded transformation of a commodity credit program into a foreign aid program that benefited Iraq more than most other countries.

Iraq-gate is replete with curiosities. How did B.N.L.-Atlanta end up as the major participant in the credit program? (This branch, according to Rose, had a reputation on Wall Street for being involved in the arms business.) The State Department lobbied the Justice Department not to indict a prominent Jordanian who had been implicated. When Justice did issue indictments in the B.N.L. case, after a long delay, it declared that the home office of B.N.L. in Rome knew nothing of the Atlanta branch's illegal activities—a contention that has been challenged by Italian investigators and others. Particularly puzzling has been the denouement of the prosecution of Christopher Drogoul, the manager of B.N.L.-Atlanta. He was indicted on 347 counts of conspiracy and fraud. Late last month, he informed Federal Judge Marvin Shoob that he would plead guilty to each count and reveal all he knew about the B.N.L. affair, suggesting that he had simply been following the orders of others. But a week later, Drogoul appeared in court and, under a last-minute plea agreement, pleaded guilty to only sixty of the 347 counts. He did not spill his guts. Judge Shoob spent two and a half hours trying to find out from Drogoul whether B.N.L. higher-ups or U.S. officials were aware of his activities. Drogoul denied any such involvement, but he continued to hint that he had not acted on his own. An exasperated Shoob declared that an independent counsel should be appointed.

If all this does not add up to enough to force the appointment of an independent counsel, there is also the matter of the Bush Administration's reaction to Congressional inquiries on B.N.L. and prewar Iraq policy. Gonzalez's committee has had to fight with various government agencies to obtain documents and often has been denied access to what it needs. The General Accounting Office claims that its pursuit of material has been repeatedly blocked.

The House Judiciary Committee is considering requesting an independent counsel. With each new revelation, the need for one in this case becomes more apparent. Even more necessary, as Gonzalez often points out, is tighter control of international banking activity. "At this moment," he notes, "there is nobody in the government . . . that can assure you that there aren't about a hundred B.N.L.s and B.C.C.I.s taking place right now." An independent counsel might be able to clear up portions of the murky Iraq-gate scandal, but much of the real work remains with Congress.

**PHILIP M. STERN**

Phil Stern, who died June 1, was a journalist, a satirist, a philanthropist, a humanist, an activist and, neither last nor least, a catalyst. He was born rich but wrote, fought and cared for the poor—for people who could not have known of his various good works but could not help but be affected by them.

# Great Danes

Last week, the doubting Danes did it. Defying the odds and their own political establishment—all major parties, the unions and the bulk of the national press—they refused to ratify the Maastricht treaty by a vote of 1,652,999 to 1,606,730. Thus, a fraction of the Danish electorate upset the whole process of European integration.

Lawyers in Brussels will now have to determine how an agreement signed by twelve countries can be applied by a lesser number (deliberately, no provision had been made for a refusal to ratify). They will also have to provide for the coexistence within the same Community of members that are bound by previous rules (those of the Rome Treaty), like Denmark or any country following its example, and members bound by the Maastricht agreement. Above all, the Danish veto alters the very nature of the battle for ratification. François Mitterrand, for instance, immediately told his people that they, too, will ultimately decide the fate of the treaty in a referendum. All over Europe opponents of Maastricht were cheered by the Danish vote.

It has been a dubious battle so far, with strange and confusing alignments. Among the opponents of further European integration are those who are against the rule of money and of an uncontrolled technocracy. But there are also jingoists hostile to "bloody foreigners." On the other side are the Maastricht battalions, behind whose splendid slogans about internationalism and modernity one can distinguish the commanding voice of big business.

To Polonius asking what he was reading, Hamlet replied, "Words, words, words." All Europeans, not just the Danes, could reply similarly, faced with the Maastricht treaty. As the debate now deepens, one hopes they will discover the interests hidden beneath the words. The lesson from Copenhagen is not only that small countries may resent being bullied by big ones. It is also that the people may occasionally upset the cleverest calculations of their masters.

# Old Money Game

*Manila*

"Money wins the game," claims Roger Magyaya. Nevertheless, he and fellow members of Kasama, a tenant farmers' association, ran for municipal councils fifty miles south of Manila in the Philippines' May 11 elections. As these dirt-poor candidates campaigned door to door, all

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they could offer voters was a few cigarettes.

The first presidential returns suggested that Magyaya was wrong. Graft-busting Miriam Santiago leapt to the front of the seven-candidate field despite her lack of funds, and House Speaker Ramon Mitra's traditional patronage machine broke down. Some newspaper columnists proclaimed a new era for Philippine democracy.

But there was less here than met the eye. Santiago soon dropped into a near tie for second place with Marcos crony Eduardo Cojuangco, a million votes behind former Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos. Although nominally a "nontraditional politician" like Santiago, Ramos had massive government funds at his disposal because he was backed by President Corazon Aquino. Unofficial returns indicate he has won.

Santiago's anticorruption theme is nothing new in Philippine politics; it helped Marcos win the presidency in 1965. Nor is her mass appeal unique: The incoming vice president and the two most popular senatorial candidates are movie stars. Respected *Manila Chronicle* editor Armando Doronila sees more show than substance in that appeal, dismissing her charisma as "the kind associated with faith healers." Santiago deserves credit for cleaning up the crooked Commission on Immigration and Deportation. But in her disastrous subsequent stint as Secretary of Agrarian Reform, her temper tantrums and bogus claims alienated farmers, progressives, politicians and bureaucrats alike. Her charges of election fraud will go nowhere without hard evidence—especially since the Commission on Elections is credited with overseeing relatively clean, peaceful polling ("only" sixty-one or so dead this year, compared with 149 in the 1988 local elections).

What of the likely winner, the enigmatic Ramos? This former general backed Marcos's dictatorship for fourteen years, then helped topple him. Seven anti-Aquino coup attempts erupted under his nose, but he quelled them all. His supporters see him as honest, sincere, upright. His detractors label him a "Cory with pants"—prone to favoritism, soft on corruption, weak on social justice issues and now beholden to Aquino relatives, whose contributions to Philippine progress range from stifling land reform to running the monopolistic, notoriously inept phone company.

Meanwhile, a deeply politicized military looms. Some idealistic officers seem convinced of their right to intervene if elected officials falter; more cynical elements stand ready to use civilian bungling as an excuse. The next president will face them with a "mandate" of 25 percent of the vote, without Aquino's saintly image and accompanied by a talking-shop congress still dominated by political clans. Should the newly chosen leaders make little headway against poverty, corruption, economic stagnation and daily blackouts, their terms could be cut short.

The end of America's military presence exacerbates the situation. (The last remaining facility, the Subic Bay Naval Base, will be shut down by December.) The departure slashes aid to a Philippine military fighting a communist insurgency and eager to modernize. With those priorities threatened by a shortage of funds, the military's temptation to seize power may grow. But closing the bases mercifully removed the United States as a campaign issue, and reduces it as an ongoing presence and distraction in Philippine politics. In that sense, the best thing the United States has done for Philippine democracy has been to—finally, reluctantly—leave.

Where does all this leave Kasama? Local landlords bought votes for $10 per head and defeated all the farmers' candidates. Although a few grass-roots groups had more success elsewhere in the country, Kasama's experience was all too typical. But it will try again in 1995. In the interim, Kasama and similar organizations will try to teach Filipinos to see that elections can mean more than fiestas, favors and a quick buck. They aim to change a political culture, and thus the rules of the game.

If democracy involves citizens' control over the decisions that most affect them, then Kasama has already made progress. Trained by idealistic young lawyers, its members are besting landlords in the courts and agrarian reform tribunals, getting their fair share of crops after generations of being cheated. More money in farmers' pockets translates into greater political independence. But these fights take years, and relatively few Filipinos have joined groups like Kasama. Political scientist Socorro Reyes estimates that it will take such organizations at least twenty years to master the game of political influence. Meanwhile, the population swells, ravaged hillsides and fetid slums increasingly dominate the landscape, the economy stands still and local and national elites keep buying political office to generate private profit.

And the Philippines loses the game. STEPHEN GOLUB

*Stephen Golub is a lawyer and development consultant who has lived in Manila for five years.*

★

## THE PRIMARIES ARE OVER

*They're through.*
*It seems so long since Douglas Wilder blew*
*Through town, so long since Tsongas shrunk,*
*then grew,*
*So long since Harkin said, "So long. Adieu."*

*They're done.*
*And no one I know really had much fun—*
*Not even all the pols who didn't run,*
*And must have thought, "My God! I could have won!"*

*It's set,*
*Without my even having won a bet.*
*They're through. And that, my friends, I don't regret,*
*Except what follows may be grimmer yet.*

*Calvin Trillin*

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# MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

*Los Angeles*

Race or class? This old and essential argument went rusty before it got bright, and it's been years since I had it, or witnessed it, with the intensity you find in Watts and South Central. On a Sunday morning I went to the near-legendary African Methodist Episcopal Church (founded by a runaway slave), with its handsome building and garden and its polished, optimistic congregation. Dianne Feinstein was the invited guest of the day and spoke glibly to me afterward about the need to turn "anger" into various things that came under the heading of "positive." She talked with the same smarmy earnestness that she brought to, say, her conversion to the necessary virtues of capital punishment. A few hours later, outside Mike's Mini-Mart on Figueroa Street, my first questions ignited a "race or class" dispute among a cluster of young black men. Unprompted, one of them shouted that Feinstein spends more on one dumb political TV slot than he will ever see—and he had her expenditure figure exact. So the lady needn't doubt that she has found a "target audience" of a kind. The speaker, however, was convinced that race and racism are the *radix malorum*. An older man, with a Panther-like beret and who-knows-what memories, broke in to object that the economic structure is the real problem and that race is a mere aspect of the oppression arsenal at the disposal of "the aristocracy." Having already seen the Maoist graffiti of the Revolutionary Communist Party, I was about to collapse back into a reverie of Oakland in 1969 when the same dignified older man asked me for a loan of $1.99 so that he could have a local bargain meal. At once, the youngsters were upon him. "See what you did? Everyone saying black people are all thieves and beggars. Now this man comes here and you asking him for money?" We were standing next to a charred shopping area that was once tenanted by an Anglo, a Mexican and an Arab. The consensus was unsurprisingly that, class or no class, the L.A.P.D. picks on black people. But there was no "not in front of whitey" mood that I could detect. In fact, I almost fell over when State Senator Diane Watson, current heroine of South Central for her rapid response to "the verdict," gave me a dazzling smile and said, "Kind of ironic, we had a King being beaten by a Koon."

* * *

It all goes to prove that Francis Fukuyama is on to something. In his new book he argues persuasively that men and women fight not for bread and meat and warmth but for *recognition*. Diane Watson was giving out care packages when we met, and the Crips and Bloods were supposedly turning their supposedly joint attention to the "bread and butter issues." But as John Singleton, maker of *Boyz N the Hood*, has put it: "The gangbangers have a peace treaty, but they're not exactly fraternity brothers. How long's it gonna last?" In different ways, gang warfare has lasted for the whole of human history, as anyone knows who has looked at somebody the wrong way during an Ireland-Scotland football match. The idea of "dissing" didn't originate on the mean streets around Mike's. Recent attempts to include the gangs in reformist politics were angrily compared by one good liberal I know to the hypothetical inclusion of the Mafia in the reconstruction of an Italian district. But of course that is just what does happen with organized crime and the establishment. Not for nothing does the Sicilian mob want to be known as "the Honored Society." Are Ee Ess Pea Ee Sea Tea. How absurd to say that those who will kill and die for it are "inhuman" or "subhuman" or "like animals." Only if they *wouldn't* kill and die for it would any doubt of their humanity arise.

* * *

This is exactly why it was humiliating for certain Korean entrepreneurs to try to strike a bargain with black gang leaders. The cringe-making photograph of that event was enough to arouse opposing emotions, also of honor and dignity, in other Koreans. Kim Dae Jung, who as the chief opposition leader in Korea itself has more support in L.A. than many people realize, has visited the city and done great service in appealing to the democratic tradition among his own people. But the word "Korean" is the great stopping point in conversations and arguments with blacks, because they use the term without discrimination. Said one of them to me, in the tones of the most doltish white nativist: "They come to our communities and our country to make money and ship it home. That's not right. We can't do that in their country." I don't know how he can know that—certainly not by trying—but Korea has been a semicolony of the United States for enough of its history not to need lectures or threats from ignorant Americans of any hue. The dislike among blacks for Koreans, and the euphemistic handling of this dislike by many black leaders, has to be one of the most dispiriting and demoralizing aspects not just of the Los Angeles crisis but of the current balkanization and tribalization of seemingly everything.

* * *

Fighting to the last to flourish the standard he picked up from David Duke, Pat Buchanan did the Koreans no favor by telling a local radio station that he would have been "with" them, shooting back from the upstairs window. But here for once is a use for the old cliché about the dog—in this case the feral Bull Connor dog—failing to bark. Where is the "white backlash"? The polls can't find it, try as they may. Quayle can't find it. And the disgusting Mel Levine, who thought he had found enough of it to run as a law-and-order liberal, was satisfyingly humiliated by the voters. Clinton, meanwhile, thought of trying to restage Bobby Kennedy's famous visit to Watts but called off the idea because of "logistical difficulties." Just as well. You can't hang around South Central these days and talk about passing the torch.

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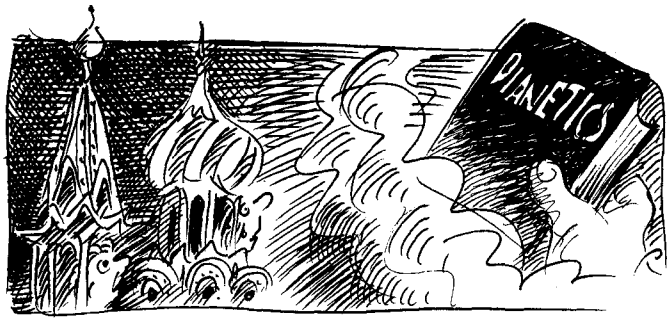
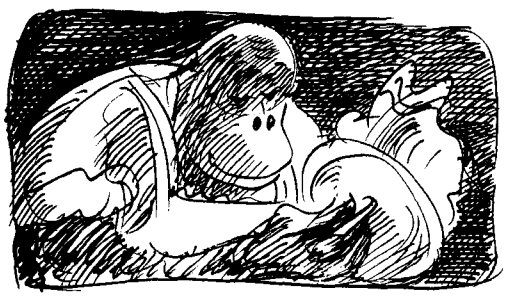
# Religion in the News

EDWARD SOREL




MOSCOW—Russia's oldest and largest university, Moscow State, has for the first time dedicated a building to an author who is not Russian. L. Ron Hubbard not only has had a building named after him but he has posthumously received an honorary degree of Doctor of Literature. A large printing of *Dianetics* in Russian will follow.

SAN LUIS POTOSÍ, MEXICO—Some of the thirty worshipers who died during a church vigil believed that the dizzying effects of the fatal gas were a sign from God, survivors said. Juan Valdez and two other men who left the service early said lightheadedness from gas fumes was common at the Mount of Olives church in El Charquillo. "The pastor told us that what we felt was nothing bad, but a manifestation of Christ," Valdez said.



JERUSALEM—Ovadia Yosef, Israel's former chief rabbi, has decided that it is permissible for religious Jews to use trained monkeys to perform tasks forbidden on the Sabbath. Monkeys could do such chores as turning on lights and washing dishes, but, says the rabbi, they *must be borrowed*, since any animal living in a Jewish home is beholden to Jewish law. In New York, Rabbi Ira Youdin of the Stephen Wise Synagogue agreed. "It's a valid decision, as the Ten Commandments say that no member of a Jewish household *or its animal stock* can work on the Sabbath. . . . Of course, I don't think my co-op would allow such a thing."

JERUSALEM—This past winter a blizzard snapped the rope that encircled Jerusalem. This eighty-mile-long rope, known in Jewish law as the Eruv, symbolically turns the city into a single dwelling, thus allowing Jews to sidestep a ban against carrying *anything* outside one's house on the Sabbath. The storm dumped more than a foot of snow on the holy city and tore the rope in several spots. As a result, tens of thousands of Orthodox Jews had to observe the Saturday ban on shlepping.

CLEVELAND—Concerned about the proliferation of clergy sex-abuse cases and the publicity such cases now receive, A. James Quinn, a respected canon lawyer, has advised church officials to send sensitive files to the Vatican Embassy in Washington. The embassy enjoys extraterritoriality, so files containing evidence on sex offenders could be denied a subpoena order. Diplomatic immunity may be the only strategy left for concealing sex-abuse crimes within the Catholic Church now that "the confidentiality of the confessional" has been effectively challenged. In a Michigan case, church officials fought a subpoena on the ground that the relevant information was privileged because the accused priest had confessed his crime to his superiors. Although the tactic delayed the victim's suit, it failed to derail it, and the Detroit archdiocese agreed to a six-figure settlement.

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# ARTICLES.

EARTH SUMMIT '92—I

# Rhetoric and Reality in Rio

SUSANNA HECHT AND
ALEXANDER COCKBURN

As Rio de Janeiro prepared for the Earth Summit by paving the road to the airport and placing in detention the abandoned children regularly preyed upon by death squads, the inhabitants of a city mangled by a disintegrating national economy braced themselves for the windfall of some 30,000 visitors.

For some of these transients—international bureaucrats, environmentalists, representatives of citizens' movements—Rio is the final milestone in a protracted itinerary of preparatory conferences, interim minisummits and drafting sessions that sent them in costly caravans from Paris to New York to Caracas to Nairobi. But as they all came once again to earth in Rio, most of them knew full well that here is not a summit that in any meaningful construction of the words will settle the world's environmental and developmental agenda for the next quarter-century within the perspectives of economic and social equity.

The brute realities of the Rio summit are briskly résuméd in its sociopolitical geometry. There is a formal conference—"ECO '92"—where national delegations and representatives from governmental institutions and their like, such as the United Nations and the World Bank, cloak evasion, betrayal and *Realpolitik* in the vocabulary of high moral purpose. A separate forum houses the so-called nongovernmental organizations (N.G.O.s), a term giving institutional expression within the U.N. framework to entities as disparate in purpose as the World Wildlife Fund, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Methodist Church. A thousand or so of these N.G.O.s have been involved in the preparatory commissions along the road to Rio. And finally, there is the Earth Parliament. Here muster those with the most knowledge and the least political weight concerning matters of land use, biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources: indigenous and ethnic groups. Explanations of the dynamics of carbon dioxide emissions, of the destruction of tropical rain forests and of intellectual ownership depend powerfully upon one's position on the various "eco tiers."

These divisions mark the chasms that separate competing concepts of planetary responsibility. They also explain the dilution and downgrading of potential Rio agreements from conventions and treaties to "nonbinding principles."

*Susanna Hecht, a professor in the graduate school of planning at U.C.L.A., wrote with Alexander Cockburn* The Fate of the Forest: Developers, Destroyers and Defenders of the Amazon *(Verso).*

At issue are agreements on carbon dioxide emissions, forest conventions, the preservation of biodiversity and intellectual property rights. But in this last decade of the century there can no longer be even the pretense of a universal, mutually agreed-upon agenda. Consider the example of the United States. In the final countdown to the formal opening of the Rio summit the U.S. government announced that it would not sign a biodiversity treaty on the ground that it refuses to pay for preservation outside its borders or hamper its biotechnology industries. As George Bush's budget director, Richard Darman, so memorably put it in a formal lecture at Harvard two years ago, "Americans did not fight and win the wars of the twentieth century to make the world safe for green vegetables." Nor spotted owls, for that matter. The posture of the Bush Administration toward the preservation of biodiversity was summed up in its assault on America's old-growth forests, which it has opened up for unsustainable logging. There should be scant repining over the fact that few if any of the agreements ratified with solemn rhetoric in Rio will have substance, since such agreements reflect the contours and power relations of a world political economy whose tendencies are nowhere so eloquently displayed as in Brazil itself. Rio does provide a moment of truth for the world, but the truth is not alluring. The sort of transcendental rhetoric traditionally associated with major U.N. conferences will scarcely do justice either to the agenda of such major players at Rio as the World Bank or to the day-to-day struggles of native peoples or farmers. The Earth Summit, remember, is officially titled the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Those last two nouns are essential in understanding the dynamics of the occasion.

## From Malthus to Stockholm

Rio's origins go back twenty years, to a world still ripe with optimism about Third World development. The participants of that conference in Stockholm still saw only promise in the Green Revolution, whose dark side—social inequality, genetic erosion, environmental damage—had yet to be widely displayed. With growth rates of 8 percent a year, countries such as Brazil seemed to have soundly embarked upon the "take-off" postulated by W.W. Rostow in his "Non-Communist Manifesto," *Stages of Economic Growth.*

The agenda in that 1972 Stockholm conference was profoundly influenced by a sharp re-emergence of Malthusian thought in the developed world, as represented by Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* and Garrett Hardin's "The Tragedy of the Commons," both appearing toward the end of the 1960s. Both blamed population increase for environmental degradation (with Hardin linking this to nonprivate forms of property), and thus fed the fears of the Haves that the gains of postwar development would be drowned in a flood tide of humans in that familiar guise—the infinitely fertile and pullulating Have-Nots.

Ehrlich's Malthusian premises were swiftly condoned by the Club of Rome, with its *Limits to Growth*, which coupled anxieties about population growth to a critique of industrial

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development, stressing that pollution, along with food shortages, was another global constraint. This technical modeling exercise (it was the first widely read book that included the *frisson* of computer modeling, thus helping to initiate an entire genre) left its readers with the omen of world populations pressed against limited resources, while generating ever-increasing amounts of poison. Population and pollution controls and the expansion of capitalist property were the sole means of avoiding doom.

*Earth Summits have an inherent tendency to avoid the tangible wherever it might obtrude.*

Unsurprisingly, Third World nations viewed these alarums, reiterated at Stockholm, as intellectual constructs whose end function would be to ratify and even enhance existing unequal economic relations and technical dependence, miring them in poverty forever. In a Third World optic, poverty rather than pollution was the central problem, and growth rates such as Brazil's were a good deal more pertinent than seminars on the pollution of the Rhine.

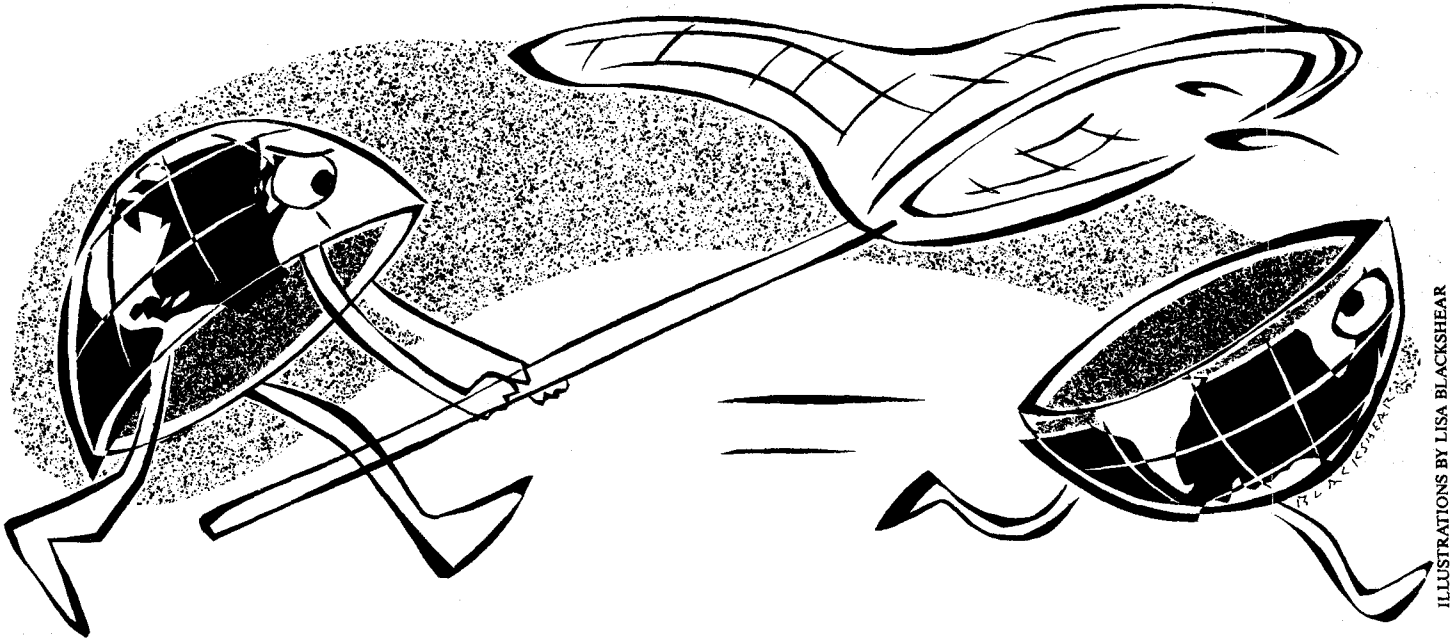
Thus at Stockholm the stage was set for a clash between a developmentalist ideology that had been leading the way in the Third World for more than a quarter-century and a new-minted set of First World concerns that embraced such notions as "no growth," population control, limited industrial development and a romanticized view of that same village life that had previously been reviled by a generation of development theorists as stifling and untuned to modernity. Such concerns resonated poorly in the Third World, which neither shared nor viewed as attractive the social context, institutional organization or even basic premises of the "global village."

At Stockholm a new and unexpected piece of contested terrain came under scrutiny: genetic resources and biotechnology. Most of the world's biodiversity resides in the South and includes locally developed strains of cultivated crops, minor cultivars and wild cousins of the major food crops of the planet. Billions of dollars' worth of crop and medicinal germ plasm is marketed per annum or uses tropical plants as templates for synthetic drugs.

This expression of biodiversity has traditionally been regarded in the First World as belonging to a "global" heritage rather than one informed by historical reflection on who exactly developed these cultivars and domesticated and modified the raw plant materials that provide the biological inputs for many of the new bioengineered crops. Developing countries were encouraged to favor "global heritage" formulations, even as First World corporations and laboratories raked in substantial royalties from private patents held on improved crops and medicines.

Patents became another focus of bitter argument across the years that separate Stockholm from Rio, and indeed intellectual property rights formed the banner under which the Bush Administration declared its hostility to patent protection for materials that emanate from peasant fields rather than biotech labs in the First World, notably North America. The row over intellectual rights and the distribution of royalties has also highlighted battles within the Third World, as governments and committees were plunged into often lethal struggle over issues of sovereignty and allocation of the benefits of increasingly valuable botanical materials.

The height of formal Third World combativeness in this interplay of environmental and developmental agendas came in 1974 with the manifesto of the New International Economic Order. The issues were straightforward: increased transfer of funds from the North to the South, enhancement of the capacities of developing countries in the areas of science and technology, financing of transfers of technology and changes in patent law to ease this process. The counterattack from conservatives in the First World was not long in coming, and if the uproar over Third World "arrogance" and "blackmail" at last subsided it was only because the New International Economic Order was regarded as a slogan from the dead past.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY LISA BLACKSHEAR

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**From Greenhouse to Our House**

In terms of international agreements Stockholm was not without results. From its embers arose the U.N. Environmental Program (UNEP) and the signing of conventions on marine pollution from ship dumping, on world cultural and national heritage sites, and on Antarctic seals. As such things go, these conventions were noncontentious. Seals seem to have almost as much purchase on human sympathy as pandas, heritage sites insure profitable tourist revenues and marine dumping would be impossible to monitor. The following year saw the signing of a convention that prohibited trade in endangered species of fauna and flora; that convention was equipped with a worldwide reporting network and a system of trade sanctions.

Concern over pollution at the international level focused primarily on the atmosphere. The 1979 First World Climate Conference worried about acid rain and warned of the destruction of the ozone layer, and there were some murmurings about a possible "greenhouse effect." That same year the first convention on long-range, transboundary pollution was signed. It is of course politically irreproachable to focus attention on such global problems as ozone depletion or an increase in $CO_2$ emissions allegedly leading to steady warming of the world's climate (a thesis that still awaits anything approaching proof or indeed any plausible predictive model), but such attention did have two interesting consequences.

Despite their furious and well-justified protests, Third World countries came to be given equal status as greenhouse gas polluters with First World industrialized nations, which had been steadily discharging carbon dioxide and kindred vexed substances into the atmosphere for well over a century and which were still accounting for the overwhelming bulk of such discharges [see Praful Bidwai, page 853]. Furthermore, "global concerns" had the useful effect of distracting attention from more localized and specific issues. For every cubic meter of newsprint devoted to the greenhouse effect it would be hard to find a cubic centimeter about fertilizer runoff consequent upon intensive agricultural practices in the First World. Here is a major, identifiable, reversible environmental disaster that is poisoning water tables and killing rivers and lakes, and yet it is rarely seen as an issue for the First World. Northern politicians and the World Bank lecturing the South on sound environmental practice would regard it as the height of impertinence to be told that a useful thing for them to do would be to return home and pressure the farm lobby and the fertilizer industry. Earth Summits, zeppelins of moral rhetoric, have an inherent tendency to avoid the tangible wherever it might obtrude. Such distaste for the local and the specific was comically displayed in a recent conference on world parks, held in Caracas, a particularly favored spot for such moots. The delegates found it hard to obtain taxis and kindred services, and after irritated inquiry they much deplored the attempted coup that was so inconveniencing their deliberations.

It is possible to look back across the years separating Rio from Stockholm and find evidence of the effort to set environmental regulation in a context responsive to the needs of the Third World. As far back as 1974 the Coyococ Declaration (the fruit of a 1974 U.N. conference in Mexico) urged the elaboration of alternative development models more sensitive to the diversity of local cultures and ecosystems and to indigenous knowledge. Although there was as yet no direct input from actual indigenous or forest peoples, the beginnings of an alternative framework were being put in place, anticipating the N.G.O. Forum and the Earth Parliament. By the end of the 1980s the Brundtland Report, named for Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway, was addressing itself to issues of equity and deploring the separation of environmental issues from larger production processes. But even as the rhetoric was improving, a new economic ice age was swiftly converting the landscape, both physical and intellectual, into a neoliberal tundra.

The Third World national delegations congregating in Rio have a mien very different from the spirited profile apparent in the mid-1970s, when the calls for a New International Economic Order were at their zenith. Amid collapsing economies, stratospheric debt and stringent austerity programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund, these delegations have been brought to heel. Simultaneously, their very standing as sovereign states has been increasingly compromised in the eyes of their own civil societies, which see them as predatory and corrupt domestically and internationally as servile executors of the First World's economic agenda. The Earth Summit's host country, Brazil, is testimonial to these developments.

With the highest absolute levels of deforestation on the planet, cities shrouded in pollution, a population of which less than 8 percent has access to potable water, Brazil has environmental problems of immense proportions. But such problems pale in comparison with issues of economy, social equity and justice. Brazil has one of the worst income distributions in the world and is now spiraling down in negative growth. In São Paulo more than 186,000 jobs were eliminated in March alone. Levels of unemployment are higher than they have been in eight years, and more than 40 percent of the population lives in absolute poverty. In 1991, while environmental bureaucrats were fashioning their position papers in Geneva and New York, the Catholic Land Commission in Brazil reported that 242,196 people were involved in struggles over rights to more than 7 million hectares of land, a number that

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does not include the Yanomami Indians' battle for 6 million hectares of their own territory. Some fifty-four peasants and rural workers were assassinated, and Brazil's native population was reduced by twenty-seven murders, twenty-one suicides consequent upon cultural dislocation, with an additional 229 perishing in epidemics.

Meanwhile, Brazil's government has been racked with accusations of corruption. Since Fernando Collor de Mello, the toast of the neoliberals, took office as President in May 1990, more than 150 indictments for corruption have been filed per month, with the lion's share of the charges against Collor's clique. By spring of this year the stink was so bad that Collor had to dismiss virtually the entire Cabinet. First Lady Rosanne Collor was charged with misappropriation of funds, resulting from her perfectly natural confusion between *carentes* (the needy) and *parentes* (her relatives), allocating staggering charitable disbursements to the latter. The latest chapter in this saga sees Collor's own brother accusing the President of extortion, of administering an immense personal slush fund and of turning him on to cocaine and making a pass at his wife.

What the case of Brazil exemplifies so thoroughly is the decline in the leadership role of the Third World state when it comes to economic development. Hopping to the tune of international donors, such states have become less the providers of benefits (except to their corrupt elites) than enforcers of "stabilization" and "structural adjustment reforms." Such erosion in capacities has been accompanied by a fierce ideological attack, with neoliberal and monetarist reformers blaming the erratic performance of Third World economies on statist interventions that have distorted the free functioning of markets. Simultaneously discrediting these states in the eyes of the left has been their spineless response to I.M.F. austerity programs and their inability to address worsening economic and social conditions.

### Big Bank Theory

Agreements such as those proposed in Rio assume a neutrality of law, along with the ability of a state to implement such law. They also assume that such conventions can be easily applied, no matter what the social, cultural or environmental setting. But as the more radical elements of the N.G.O. community (nowhere so forcefully presented as in the Tribal People's Charter—the Penang Declaration promulgated in Malaysia in February) have reiterated, the goals of resource management promoted in these agreements are rooted in the values and perceptions of Western or Western-trained professionals, which are not universally shared. This widespread distrust of the state, along with the proposals that governments are compelled by economic duress to endorse, has pushed the Rio debates in two diametrically opposite directions.

In the formal meetings of ECO '92 the most visible strategy is the creation of markets through such neoliberal instruments as pollution rights, and reliance on markets as the ultimate arbiters of value for forests and intellectual property. Thus environmental concerns are transported into a "nonpolitical" commercial arena where these same market forces hold sway. At that same "green vegetable" speech at Harvard, Richard

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Darman offered, for "those who would fight for more than green vegetables," the banner of "market-oriented growth" while lamenting that "the management of market-oriented pluralism is often too subtle and complex to capture the public imagination." Nowhere can reliance on the market be seen so clearly this year as in the World Bank's World Development Report, which focuses on the environment and was compiled under the authority of Lawrence Summers, the bank's chief economist and vice president. The premises of the document ignore a generation's worth of work on environmental issues. The value of the environment as a "good" is placed effectively at zero, so its destruction has no cost and no negative implications for current or future production.

*Third World states have ceded most initiative to First World institutions.*

The World Bank views environmental problems as the outcome of the "three Ps"—population, pricing problems and (faulty) property rights. Hence, the solutions offered pivot on the reduction of population by putting women to work, the elimination of pricing "distortion" by creating tradable pollution permits, and the elimination of common property. Familiar patterns of Malthusian thinking (pollution is consequent upon population pressure, not patterns of consumption) are harnessed to data-free analysis, since in Brazil the highest levels of deforestation occur in areas held as private property. In countries such as Malaysia, traditions of commonly held property have kept forests intact, until these are replaced by impeccably "private" logging concessions that destroy.

Lunatic assumptions flit across the report's intellectual horizon: Soil depletion is the consequence of a lack of development (a thesis that can be confuted by anyone with the curiosity to visit California's Central Valley); the market in pollution rights will proceed smoothly, beyond politics or the exercise of bribery.

The World Bank report is a benchmark, in that it presents with savage clarity the U.S. posture on global issues concerning development and the environment. The bank tilts away from social programs and back toward infrastructural schemes of a kind discredited during the past quarter-century. The funds for growth and for environmental reform in the Third World would, in the bank's vision, largely be generated by increased trade, rather than direct First World transfers. Such a perspective ignores the dynamic of very large existing transfers from the Third World to the First, also inequities in terms of trade. If the official UNCED in Rio could be evoked by any one document it would be this, just as the spirit of the report is best distilled in Summers's offhand note in one memo that many Third World countries are underpolluted and should be hospitable to industries causing, say, prostate cancer because life expectancy rates make it unlikely that workers would last long enough to fall prey to this older men's affliction.

The formal conference in Rio offers three main strategies. One tendency in these discussions has been to occlude the state's role altogether and emphasize individualized consumption patterns—a consumer-choice model of conservation. Most thoroughly elaborated for tropical forest issues, the arguments run something like this: If eating hamburgers causes forests to fall, and Brazil-nut snacks keep them standing, then consumer decisions lie at the heart of environmental salvation. Careful consolidated purchases, including those of large tracts of land for conservation in tropical countries; the perfection of markets (if the forests are correctly assessed in market terms they will not be destroyed); and deft marketing strategies (the Body Shop, Ben & Jerry's Rainforest Crunch, etc.) create economic conditions through which beneficial environmental results can be most effectively achieved. This kind of strategy is ideologically fashionable, antistatist, and it ignores any possible underlying structural dynamic that might be at play. Its appeal lies in the "what you can do to save the world" realm, and in "unproblematic" market solutions.

The second central strategy deflects efforts away from action and into large scientific bureaucracies. Here the focus is on assessment, research, zoning exercises and agreements to think about things profoundly for long and well-funded periods of time, and to think about them internationally, rather than in terms of the local, the specific and the possible. The U.S. position on $CO_2$ emissions—that it agrees to assess emissions—is a typical response.

The third strategy is the creation of overarching international institutional structures and monitoring bodies. But if U.N. agencies are to monitor the environment or enforce international agreements, who would actually do the work? The U.N. Development Program and UNEP have been at loggerheads for a decade over environmental turf. Moreover, the long-standing resistance of the United States to the U.N. would further compromise any enforcement powers of these watchdogs. As the United States does not obey World Court decisions it finds distasteful, there is no a priori reason to believe that laws would have much effect, whether or not the United States is a signatory.

The most critical new environmental initiative revolves around the Global Environmental Facility, elaborated by the Group of Seven and administered through the World Bank. An example of what one might expect from the G.E.F. is the Amazon Pilot Program, which represents a potential investment of some $1.5 billion over the next five years in Amazonian conservation schemes. This is the single largest environmental program ever, and the largest tropical forest/biodiversity initiative. Its current status is instructive, and explains why many N.G.O.s and forest peoples deplore this option.

The Amazon project, which focuses on enhancement of research organizations, elaboration of regional conservation programs and "sustainable development" efforts, has specifically excluded nongovernmental entities, in spite of persistent efforts by local communities and local advocates to have some purchase on projects directly affecting them, and to channel some of the money away from the usual pockets. Thus con-

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flictive, expensive and sabotaged programs will probably be the outcome. It was in reference to the G.E.F. initiatives that Brazil's Environmental Minister, José Lutzenberger, railed against any further funds from the World Bank to Brazil, arguing that the kinds of proposed investments and their magnitude would simply fuel corruption in organizations already greasy with bribes and financial sleight of hand. Lutzenberger made this outburst during the New York preparatory meetings. For many, Lutzenberger, fired by Collor soon thereafter, summed up the dynamics of formal ECO '92 agreements: exclusion of civil society, World Bank control of the major resources, with such funds as become available basically fueling national bureaucracies.

### An 'Alternative' Rio

But if the Third World states have ceded most initiative to First World institutions, their frailty has also made possible more positive perspectives for political action. Weakened, corrupt, delegitimized, their impotence has opened up considerable room for the elaboration of new civil-state relations. This terrain has increasingly come to be occupied by civic associations (housewives, peasant leagues, environmental groups) pressing demands on the state through the "politics of claims" or seeking to find solutions to collective problems without the intervention of the state. With more formal democratic structures, more participatory forms of decision making and reduced (but still considerable) levels of repression, local communities—often using the formal N.G.O. structure—are attempting to improve deteriorating economic and social conditions.

This collapse in state capacity must be understood very clearly. It is here that the origins of an "alternative" Rio lie, and why there is such suspicion about state-to-state agreements when the state is seen as either irrelevant or pernicious.

The structure of environmental debates and proposed "solutions" to the environmental crises of the tropical world are skewed in an ideological construct of conservation and development that is largely removed from the historical and economic realities of most of the Third World. In response to this, and to the declining living conditions of many of the poor, national political and social movements have increasingly moved into the sphere of "political ecology," where the hope is to redefine the environmental agenda in terms that address more fundamental questions of resource distribution and access, political rights and processes; also to consider larger philosophical issues regarding the nature of property (ranging from usufruct to intellectual property rights), the nature of nature (untrammeled Eden or artifact and habitat), and technical and development alternatives. Environmental issues are but one component in a broader range of activities, and the central focus is on social justice. While there is an argument to be made about the value of indigenous knowledge and management of tropical resources, the environmental dimensions of these concerns have largely been appropriated by mainstream environmental movements, while international attention to the legitimacy of pressing claims for social justice has been scant. This is the disjuncture that underlies the three conferences at Rio. □

EARTH SUMMIT '92—II

# North vs. South On Pollution

PRAFUL BIDWAI

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro shows all signs of becoming an arena of North-South confrontation over the division of environmental resources; responsibility for global warming and depletion of the ozone layer; distribution of the burden entailed by the necessary remedies; and the financing of cleanup measures. The April conference of the Group of 77 (developing countries) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on this issue and the response to it from the Group of Seven finance ministers during their meeting in Washington put the North-South divergence in a harsh light.

The financial aspect of this divergence is the starkest. The North would like the South to take measures that will cost $125 billion a year, which must come through funding over and above official development assistance from international bodies and individual states. That assistance totals only about $50 billion a year, equivalent to 0.3 percent of the North's gross domestic product. The South would like a new institutional arrangement that is more democratic, broad-based and better funded than that provided by existing multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, which are heavily weighted in favor of the North. However, the North rejects a new mechanism and insists that the present arrangement, in the form of the Global Environmental Facility, is adequate and could be strengthened. The facility—operated by the World Bank for two U.N. agencies—was launched two years ago with a mere $1.2 billion. Its actual disbursals have been marginal.

Within a broader perspective, North-South differences run much deeper. The most basic of the South's environmental problems are the erosion and degradation of an already inadequate natural resources base. The North's biggest problems—waste, emission and pollution—arise from overconsumption and intrusion into the global environmental space. The disproportion in the per capita consumption of resources between the North and the South is on the order of 3 to 1 or even 15 to 1, depending on the measures chosen; in the extreme case, the North may consume thirty times more than the South. The South rightly argues that the bulk of the truly global problems confronting humanity are in fact Northern in origin and are caused by the North's gargantuan overconsumption. Again, while the South consumes products of nature, including relatively unprocessed ones such as wood, to meet survival needs (e.g., 70 to 90 percent of wood used is burned for fuel), the North uses them as a part of luxury consumption (four-fifths as lumber in construction or manufacturing).

The most serious feature of this inequity is the phenom-

*Praful Bidwai is a senior editor with* The Times of India.

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enon of global warming, which is attributable to emissions of carbon dioxide (mainly from fossil-fuel burning), methane (from cattle and agriculture) and chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs (from refrigeration, air conditioning, paints, aerosols and electronics). The North accounts for up to 90 percent of the carbon dioxide that has so far accumulated in the earth's atmosphere. Going by the index called "natural debt of a nation," developed by environmental scientist Kirk Smith, the disparities are indeed huge. If U.S. per capita annual emissions (5.2 tons) were to be frozen and India's (0.22 tons) were to grow at recent rates, India would not reach one ton a year until 2024—a level surpassed by the United States well before 1900. As the Center for Science and Environment in New Delhi has shown in a remarkable study, the true impact of greenhouse gas emissions is clearly revealed when a country's gross emissions are discounted by its share of the global "sink" (the earth's natural capacity to absorb greenhouse gases). If the sink is divided in relation to the population on the premise that all human beings have an equal right to the earth's atmosphere, the North's net emissions account for up to 91 percent of the total. If Northern emissions could be traded with the South at $15 per ton of carbon equivalent and damages were to be paid at $25 per ton, the top fifteen polluters would have to pay $110 billion to the South; the United States alone would have to pay $45 billion a year.

And yet the North is asking the South to restrict its consumption as part of a "global" effort. The worst example of this inequity is the Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer (1987), an international treaty that restricts the consumption of CFCs on pain of trade penalties for noncompliance. This is an exercise in dealing with symptoms, not causes, and of treating unequals as equals. Since no responsibility is attached to different countries for their varying contributions to the CFC burden, no rights and obligations follow. So the South, with its current emission of 12 percent of CFCs, is asked to make the same commitment, albeit over a longer period of time, as the North, which produces 88 percent of the total. The underlying assumption is that it would be a disaster if every Chinese or Indian (not American or Japanese) had a refrigerator, but that it is not necessary for the rest of the world to find substitutes for CFCs.

And yet it is the Montreal protocol that is being offered by Northern governments as the preferred model for global environmental regulation—in waste dumping, tropical forestry, climate control and conservation of genetic resources—of which last the South accounts for 90 percent of the world total. The South has so far resisted pressures on the last three, but it is far from clear how long the region can hold out, given its parlous financial state, rapidly deteriorating trade position (today a barrel of oil costs ten times more, and steel three times more, in biomass than it did twenty years ago), global recession, competitive demand from the Eastern European economies, the declining effectiveness of U.N. development-related agencies and the growing meanness of the North.

At Kuala Lumpur, G-77 made an impassioned proposal for effective, equitable partnership, an environment tax and a new model of global environment management. Southern nongovernment organizations have also called for participatory democracy with global equity based on the right to survival, the right to information, equal rights to the atmosphere and global resources, and appropriate compensation for community biological knowledge. However, they have failed to move either Northern governments or the bulk of nongovernment organizations and Green parties in the North. While the former remain helplessly tied to industrial interests and lobbies, the latter tend to be oblivious of Southern (and truly global) concerns, narrowly focused on domestic issues and limited by an inability to change Western consumption patterns. If UNCED becomes a forum for an equal dialogue between the more environmentally concerned people of the North and South, it could perform an invaluable role. But the Rio conference may show that the world still has a long way to go before environmental equity and justice emerge in a sustainable way on a truly global scale. □

LETTER FROM EUROPE

# The Stink Of Money

DANIEL SINGER

Los Angeles is not the only place perturbing the sermons of the preachers of history's end and capitalism's eternal youth. From Western Europe, too, come all sorts of tales of woe requiring the Panglossian refrain that "everything is for the best in the best of all possible capitalist worlds." From Bonn comes news of a country threatened by strikes as well as suggestions that the Germans may by now be fed up with performing as Europe's paragons of virtue. From Milan come stories of corruption on such a scale that Sicilians are soon likely to give the Milanese lessons in probity. From the Corsican city of Bastia comes proof that the disaster at a sports stadium, which killed fifteen and injured more than a thousand, was the result of sordid pecuniary calculations. This tragedy occurred at a time when French Socialists are being driven to a political, not just psychoanalytical, examination of their relationship with money. Yet the fact that Western Europe thus reveals the seamy side of its system in no way discourages its eastern neighbors. Indeed, judging by the Mayor of Moscow's spirited defense of his own mafiosi, one is tempted to say quite the contrary. The new message reads: Profiteers of all lands unite.

## A Misbehaving Model?

After years of successful union-bashing, it is almost taken for granted that wage and salary earners will swallow anything. It therefore came as a surprise when the German union of public employees took on the government and, after eleven days of coordinated strikes, forced it to grant salary increases of more than 5 percent, a barrier the government swore it neither could nor would break. The surprise deepened when

*Daniel Singer is* The Nation*'s Europe correspondent.*

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union members then voted against the compromise reached by their leaders. This, while not relaunching the strike, conveyed the mood of the rank and file on the eve of the crucial trial of strength between the private-sector employers, who stuck to 3 percent, and the powerful engineers' union, the more than 4 million strong IG Metall, which asked for 9 percent but was ready to settle for anything above 6 percent. Franz Steinkühler, its leader, dismissed accusations of "unpatriotic behavior" by saying he saw no reason why reunification should be a boost for business and a burden for working people. On May 18 the two sides struck a deal at just under 6 percent, roughly the same level the public employees received.

The skirmishes on the labor front were nevertheless followed with fascination in the rest of Europe because, since reunification, Germany has been a puzzle to its neighbors and the subject of contradictory assessments. Has it bitten off more than it can chew or are we dealing with the teething troubles of a growing empire? Should the relatively high rate of inflation and the budget deficit be taken as first signs of a broader European crisis, or are they merely transitional symptoms as Germany proceeds with its "creative destruction" in the east? And if the latter, how will it use its increased power: to federate Western Europe? to resume a *Drang nach Osten* (eastward expansion)? to proceed with both policies at once? The questions are unanswered because reunification has not gone very far. ("I am glad, at last we are one country," says the Ossie. "So are we," answers the Wessie. The joke, though stale, is still topical. The labor conflicts just mentioned were limited to the Federal Republic. The Ossies were affected, since their wages are linked with those prevailing in the west, but they remained interested onlookers.)

Yet the preoccupation of the Western establishment, and of its press, can be attributed to the part the Federal Republic used to play in the old order of things. It could always be relied upon to prop up NATO or insure the unity of the Common Market. The allegedly independent Bundesbank was the keeper of the interests of big business well beyond Germany's frontiers, while the German workers were being presented to their supposedly more class-conscious British, French or Italian comrades as proof that collaboration with management is not only virtuous but a paying proposition. If this anchor of capitalist stability in the heart of Europe is weighed, where will the Continent drift?

### Milan and Morals

In Italy the system was already shaken by the April elections, which showed that people have had enough of the permanent rule of Christian Democracy and its allies, with the resulting nepotism and scandals. The corruption, however, was associated in the public mind with the backward South, not with the advanced North, very much part of modern Europe. The South, incidentally, was conceived of as extending quite far North, since the Lombard League, one of the electoral winners, had a slogan condemning "thieving" Rome—*Roma ladrona*. Now it has been discovered that the real den of thieves is to be found in the heart of Lombardy, in worthy, bourgeois, prosperous Milan, the "moral capital" of the country.

The miracle is how the long-existing scandal was uncovered. Once again, as in the movie *Z*, it is a case of brave magistrates showing zeal. The prosecutors arrested a few industrialists and kept them in jail. Unused to such treatment, they began to sing and, together with the politicians involved, they produced the libretto of a gruesome opera likely to echo throughout the country for some time to come. The gist of the story is that Milan had an elaborate system of kickbacks and handouts. No contractor could get work on, say, the municipal sports stadium or subway without a bribe, and the money duly found its way to party coffers and private pockets. While dozens of businessmen and politicians have been indicted, the hunt goes on. The Christian Democrats, as usual, were prominent at the receiving end, though the Socialists were the main beneficiaries. This affair is a terrible, possibly fatal, setback in the brilliant career of Bettino Craxi.

Craxi took over the Socialist Party sixteen years ago and concluded that what was sauce for the fat Christian Democratic goose was sauce for the smaller Socialist gander. He joined the ruling coalition and he wanted to share the spoils. He turned his party into an efficient electoral machine and an instrument for getting cushy jobs for the boys. The operation proved at once a success—he got the premiership and the promise of even higher prizes—and a failure, since his party did not manage to overtake the fast-declining Communist Party. Now Craxi is likely to pay the price, because he cannot deny the connection: Milan was his party's showpiece; his own son was the local leader and his brother-in-law is among the accused.

But for the scandal, Craxi would have been a serious contender for either the presidency or the premiership. (After sixteen ballots, the Italian Parliament, shaken by the slaying of the anti-Mafia crusader Judge Giovanni Falcone, chose Oscar

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Luigi Scalfaro, an honest but conservative Christian Democrat, as President of the Republic.) The Democratic Party of the Left (P.D.S.), formerly the Communist Party, which based its conversion on an alliance with Craxi, must now reconsider its strategy. Outgoing President Francesco Cossiga, the leagues and all those who included Craxi in their plans must now revise their calculations.

*'Money that buys, money that crushes . . . money that rots the very conscience of the people.'*

The ancient Romans had it wrong when they claimed *pecunia non olet*. Money stinks to high heaven and the Italians are put off by the stench. In one sense, that is healthy. People realize that money, glorified and no longer disputed as a standard, actually corrupts everything it touches, both personal and political. But it serves little purpose to bring down a system if you don't have a better one to put in its place. With the Socialists betrayed, the P.D.S. bewildered and its splinter, Rifondazione Comunista, already torn between conservatives and reformers, the left seems in no position to offer an alternative. Until it does, the leagues and demagogues will benefit from the natural revulsion of the people. Fortunately, the Italians have learned through bitter experience that there are cures worse than the disease and saviors who begin by promising to clean the air and end by imposing a totalitarian climate.

**'Money That Kills'**

Corsica was promised a fiesta. Instead it had a massacre. On May 5, in the semifinal soccer match of the French Cup, Bastia was to meet Marseilles, the champions. Just as it was to begin, the provisional stand collapsed, bringing its toll of dead and injured. The inquiry has shown beyond doubt that they were victims of greed. Since there was no problem selling tickets even at high prices, it was decided to more than double the seating capacity. A metal structure was put up in a rush. For the sake of profit, regulations were violated and safety checks ignored; the number of people guilty of at least negligence is growing. As the scandal unfolds, one also learns a great deal about the big-money takeover of sports in general and soccer in particular, with its huge under-the-table payments to star performers, its shady middlemen, its double ledgers and its double accounts.

The focus on the corrupting power of money comes at an awkward time for the government because a provincial judge seems determined to bring into court an old case accusing a company of acting as a screen for transfers favoring the Socialist Party. If the Minister of Justice blocks the case, he will be accused of bias. If he does not, the Socialists will once again be associated with crooked ways. Let there be no misunderstanding: The Socialists are no more venal than the other parties. In France, unlike in Italy, the dirty money was used only for party or electoral purposes. Besides, French Socialists can remind the Gaullists or the Conservatives of greater sins committed when they were in office. The snag is that the Socialists must now argue that they are not quite as bad, whereas in the past they claimed to belong to a different species. The unease among their rank and file illustrates the gap between the moral posture in opposition and the party's conduct in office once it had been converted to what is called, euphemistically, the "culture of government."

The quotation "money that kills" is taken from a speech by François Mitterrand when he took over as leader of the Socialist Party in 1971. He was quite scathing: "money that buys, money that crushes, money that kills, money that ruins and money that rots the very conscience of the people." He probably would be ready to repeat those words today. There is a basic difference, however. At that time Mitterrand also claimed that he was in favor of "a break with capitalism." Today his Prime Minister, Pierre Bérégovoy, is the darling of the Bourse and of international finance. You cannot at the same time preach *enrichissez vous* and sing "money is the root of all evil." More accurately, you can, but at the risk of being accused of schizophrenia or, against the present background of poison and putrefaction, hypocrisy.

Stinking smell of success? Judging by an article by Gavril Popov in the Paris newspaper *Libération*, it is pure perfume for the new class rising beyond the Elbe.

**From Pangloss to MacHeath**

About a hundred years ago, at the time of the famous Panama Canal scandal, two Jews in Eastern Europe were discussing the skills of Western speculators. "Fantastic, these Parisians," claimed one. "They can make money out of nothing." "Let's not exaggerate," answered the other. "The people we could find here, only we haven't got the canal." Now the Eastern Europeans have got their "canal," one that Western swindlers could envy. With the collapse of Communism and the resulting legal confusion, the scope for thievery, for converting public property into private gain, is tremendous. In Poland, banking and other scandals can no longer be counted. Today it is the turn of the privatizers in Prague. But Russia, too, is getting ready for a mass transfer of property and the rise of great fortunes amid growing poverty. The novelty in Popov's prose is that this daylight robbery is raised to the rank of a doctrine.

The author is not just anybody. Editor of *Voprosy Ekonomiki,* once the Communist Party's theoretical organ, he is one of the leaders of the Democratic Russia movement and was Moscow's first freely elected Mayor. It is true that he has been openly accused of allowing fellow councilors on the Moscow soviet to take over state property at a pittance. But one thing Popov cannot be accused of is lack of candor.

In the *Libération* piece, his basic premise is that "the Russian people are, in their majority, against a market economy." Hence, for this democrat, the political system cannot be one "in which Parliament would reflect the existing structure of society." Change must be wrought by "a thin layer of the intelligentsia," made up of "intellectuals, officials, soldiers and security people." The current regime must help these reform-

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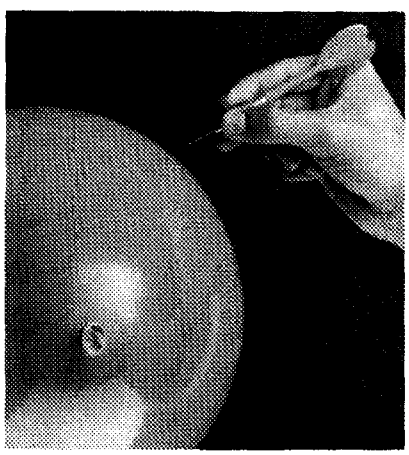

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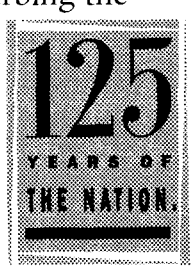


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ers work in peace "without being compelled regularly to face universal suffrage, without requiring popular sanction in a transitional period."

One of the main functions of the Russian government is to protect private enterprise, Popov claims. The appearance of private shops selling at high prices, he writes contemptuously, has led to the emergence of "protesters" struggling for "people's happiness" by breaking the windows of such shops. The authorities must punish not only the vandals but also the policemen who turn a blind eye. The author has an odd conception of the role of the Mafia in the West—one limited to its control of drugs and pornography. In Russia, he argues, it has a wider scope. Foreign companies, for instance, need criminals to protect them from other criminals. To Popov, who once had scruples, the only thing that matters is the victory of the market. Give him the mafiosi, the *nomenklatura*, any sort of scoundrels, as long as they can be turned into good capitalists.

People who have converted almost overnight from the neo-Stalinist bible to the gospel according to Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman have a strange mixture in their heads. But they also represent real interests. Their bizarre constructions bring to mind not so much Pangloss, Voltaire's parody of Leibniz, as Brecht's Mack the Knife, who in a famous passage from *The Threepenny Opera* announces the end of the era of small thieves and the beginning of that of big robbers: What is robbing a bank, compared with setting up a bank! □

PEOPLE POWER IN THAILAND

# Long Parliament Of the Streets

C. DOUGLAS LUMMIS

Paying a terrible price, the people of Thailand have won a historic victory in their country. They forced a military strongman out of the prime minister's seat, compelled the King to come out on the side of reform, and made a rubber-stamp Senate accept a constitutional amendment that would prevent any unelected general from becoming prime minister in the future. Not satisfied with these victories, they are pushing for the prosecution of the people who ordered the police and military to shoot at them for three bloody days in May.

The people's movement began when the military junta led by Gen. Suchinda Kraprayoon, which came to power in a coup d'état on February 23, 1991, promulgated a Constitution that institutionalized military control by providing for, among other things, a Senate appointed by the junta itself. To defuse criticism, the junta promised that none of its leaders, including Suchinda, would ever be prime minister. On April 7 this year, Suchinda became just that, in effect establishing a "constitutional" coup d'état government.

Protest against Suchinda's prime ministership began from the day of his appointment. Popular movement groups and the four parliamentary opposition parties formed a coalition, and Maj. Gen. Chamlong Srimuang, leader of one of the opposition parties and a devout Buddhist, emerged as the chief spokesman. Rallies drew thousands, then tens of thousands. The rally of May 4 drew more than 100,000. It was the biggest political gathering since the student uprising of 1973, which drove Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn out of the country.

The rally that began on May 4 lasted seven days and nights. It was suspended on May 11 to give the government time to act, but with the promise of reconvening on Sunday, May 17. The rally that day drew between 150,000 and 250,000 people. Toward evening one group, led by Chamlong, began a march to the government house. Things had been peaceful up to then, but now some young people—provocateurs, the opposition leaders say—began to throw rocks and smash and burn police cars. At 4:35 A.M. on Monday the police began firing, killing at least seven.

Here is where the story becomes astonishing. The police and military shot people, beat people, smashed faces with boots and rifle butts, tossed bleeding bodies onto trucks, refused pleas for medical help with cynical remarks. ("You were in the demonstration, weren't you? You deserve it!") There were no reports of the security forces using less deadly weapons such as tear gas or rubber bullets. On Monday afternoon they arrested Chamlong. From among a pile of people lying in the street to protect themselves from rifle fire, he had raised his arm and called, "Here I am. Chamlong is here. Arrest me, not the others." Presumably the troops thought that without their leader the people would go home. They did not go home. Later the same day, with at least ten dead and rumors flying of many more, and with a ban on all gatherings of more than ten people, a crowd of 100,000 to 200,000 was dispersed and carried out a kind of unarmed guerrilla war against the government troops all day and night. There are reports of people refusing to run away when police fired over their heads, of a group that bore an attack from a water cannon and was still there when the truck ran out of water and rolled away. There is a report of soldiers shooting at a demonstration of people who were carrying the bodies of those killed in an earlier shooting.

On Tuesday morning a remnant of people began a march, which was cheered by pedestrians and gradually grew to a force of 10,000. They reached a university campus, set up barricades and began a rally. With scores dead, hundreds wounded and thousands arrested, the people went on fighting.

The movement spread to the provinces. The government's information blackout was defeated by fax machines, telephones and messengers in automobiles. When the regime tried to organize pro-Suchinda rallies in the countryside, its speakers were jeered off the stage and the microphones turned over to anti-Suchinda speakers. When a group of medical workers took a petition to a provincial governor's office, they were applauded by the civil servants working there. In one provin-

*C. Douglas Lummis teaches at Tsuda College in Tokyo and is co-president of the Pacific-Asia Resource Center.*

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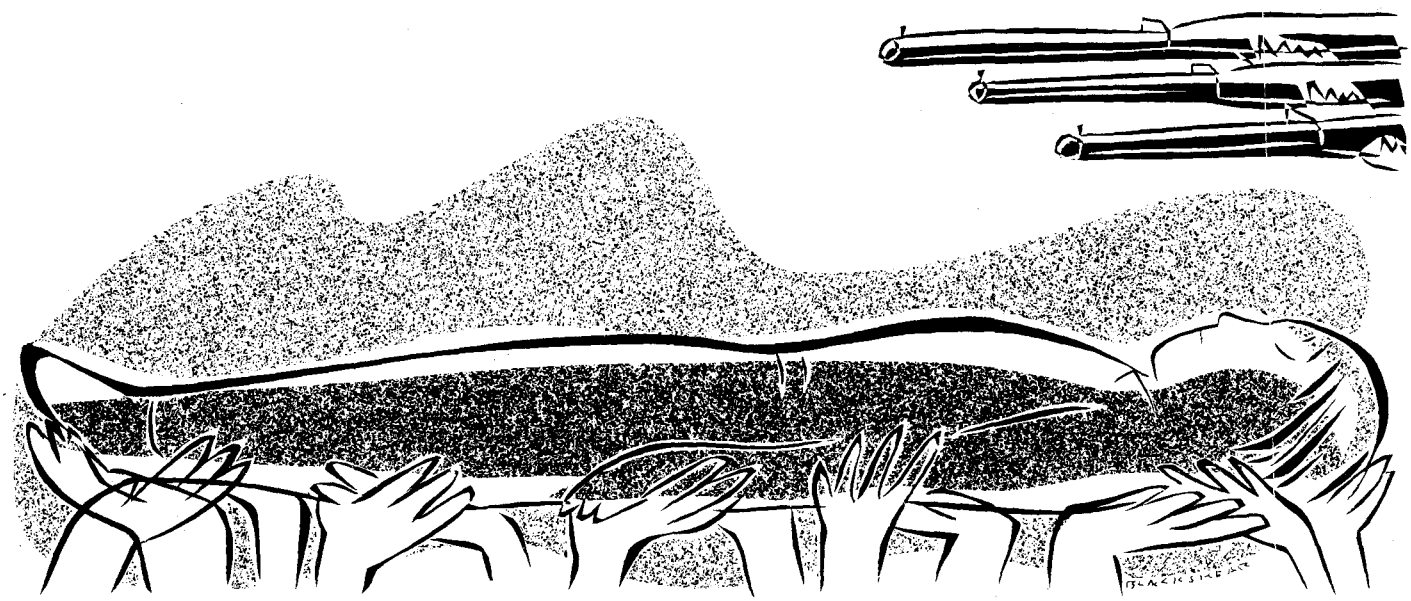
cial town the people began a campaign to raise money to pay for Suchinda's ticket out of the country.

It was three days into the shooting when Thailand's King ordered Suchinda to release Chamlong, called the two to sit on the floor before him, and delivered a lecture on the futility of fratricide. With this the fighting stopped. Thousands of arrested demonstrators were released; a few days later Suchinda stepped down. This manner of ending civil strife may be available only in Thailand. Respect for the King's humanitarian concern, however, is dampened somewhat by the fact that he acted only when it became clear that the military was not going to win; also by his pardon of Suchinda and other generals amid calls that they be tried for the murder of scores (some are saying hundreds) of Thai people. It is said that Chamlong's popularity has fallen for agreeing to participate in this performance. The victory of the people is by no means complete, but it is still a victory.

What is the source of this movement's extraordinary tenacity? Some commentators characterized it as a movement of the new middle class, or even of Thai yuppies. They noted demonstrators, especially in the earlier phases of the protest, with beepers and cordless telephones, making tactical proposals to refuse to buy commercials from biased TV stations or to withdraw money from the Military Bank. There has been a boom in Thailand's middle class in recent years, and the February 1991 coup may have been prompted by a feeling among the military, which once essentially controlled the country's economy (it owns not only the Military Bank but also factories, ships, mines, logging concessions, etc.), that its economic power was being eaten away by this new rival. Japan's *Asahi Shimbun*, which tends to see all the world as economics, editorialized on May 19 that the movement in Thailand shows how economic development makes a country "ready" for democracy, producing "large middle classes with keen political consciousness" which then begin "to demand genuine democracy commensurate with economic maturity." Aside from the ugly corollary to this reasoning—that people in countries without economic development require dictatorship—it has only a lame sort of explanatory power in the case of Thailand, where the struggle for democracy long antedates the rise of the middle class. Thailand has a tradition of a free press (not always respected) that goes back to the beginning of the century, and it has had a Constitution (actually fifteen) since 1932. The eighteen coups that have occurred in the country since 1932 are a kind of backhanded tribute to the persistence of the people's desire for democracy. Moreover, the previous major uprising, which in 1973 led to three years of civilian government, while student-led and therefore having a middle-class aspect, occurred before Thailand's period of rapid economic growth.

Beyond all that, the optimistic "economic growth brings democracy" notion ignores the fact that in Thailand, as in many countries in the South, much of the deep anger and passion for reform that lies behind the democracy movement grows not out of rising aspirations born of an improving life but out of the castastrophic disruption of the people's livelihood, culture, tradition and society—as well as the natural environment on which those things have depended—that has come as a result of economic development. Commercial logging, for example, abolished vast sections of the homeland of millions of people in northern and northeastern Thailand. Now a ban on logging and the establishment of national forest reserves have abolished their longstanding right to live in the forests that remain and have made their traditional ways of farming and foraging illegal. "Reforestation"--i.e., planting fast-growing eucalyptus trees in plantations to be sold for pulp to countries such as Japan and Taiwan (most of this financed by Japanese development aid)—is making it physically impossible to carry on any kind of farming or foraging.

Villages and families are broken up as people go off seeking work on plantations, or in Bangkok as laborers or taxi drivers or, for girls over 13, as prostitutes. Resort development projects are preceded by an advance guard of land speculators who offer families what seem like fabulous prices for their farms, difficult for poor people to refuse. But of course the money lasts only a few years, after which the people have nothing at all. In the south the highly profitable prawn farms



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are expanding at the expense of coastal mangrove forests, breeding grounds for many species of fish, and commercial trawlers are emptying out the fishing grounds of traditional coastal fisherpeople. Stretches of coastline have been declared national parks, transforming the inhabitants of age-old villages into illegal trespassers, and the parkland has then been turned over to resort developers. Workers on tobacco plantations come home soaked in pesticides and lose all their hair by the age of 40. These things cannot be dismissed as the growing pains of an essentially healthy economic development. The ecological and cultural destruction is disastrous; the poverty desperate. A few years ago the country was shocked by a report of a village whose malnourished children had become addicted to eating dirt. The wide and widening gap between the rich and the poor leads to increasing exploitation and humiliation. Will anyone dare today to call this progress? (For a fine introduction to this aspect of Thailand, see Sanitsuda Ekachai, *Behind the Smile*, published by Thai Development Support Committee, 530 Soi St. Louis 3, South Sathorn Road, Yanawa, Bangkok 10120, Thailand.)

*'If the reason for being there had not been so serious it might almost have been fun.'*

The Thai middle class is neither unaware of nor unconnected to these problems. One link is the nongovernmental organizations. In Thailand, N.G.O. refers to a new kind of activist organization, hundreds of which have grown up in the past ten years. Most of these groups are engaged in grass-roots organizing in the poor parts of the country: helping with resistance to development projects, struggling for land rights, teaching or rediscovering methods of organic farming, publicizing the troubles of rural people, assisting them in overcoming their isolation. The N.G.O.s in Thailand, as in Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries, are aiming at fundamental social change. They are largely run by people with middle-class backgrounds, but they do not necessarily promote middle-class interests or values. And they played a large role in the movement to unseat Suchinda. Many of them joined the anti-Suchinda coalition. But the point is not simply the organizational participation of these groups. The networks they have woven establish real human links, as well as information exchange, between the countryside and at least part of the urban middle class. The survival of the democratic movement in the city is something that matters to the people in the country; the agony of the people in the country is part of the political consciousness of the movement in the city. This helps to explain both why Suchinda was unable to organize the countryside in his support and why the movement in the city was inflamed with a moral passion unlikely to be generated by a debate over constitutional amendments.

In any case, the movement included far more than middle-class people. Especially in the last phase there were, observers say and photographs show, men and women from all classes and all ages. Workers' groups joined the coalition, farmers came in from the countryside and poor people came out from the slums. In 1976 the military ended three years of civilian rule with a single bloody attack on the universities. With the students out of action, the movement was defeated. This time there was no single sector that the military could isolate and crush to end resistance. Resistance was everywhere, and the military itself was isolated.

It is also evident that until the violence began, the gatherings had a festive air. Photographs show flags, banners and placards; food vendors; people singing, laughing, eating, sweeping trash out of the street and handing food and water to policemen. There was humor: The police barricade on the Paan Fah Bridge was dubbed the Berlin wall, while a precarious alternative route to the demonstration site—a large pipe that spans the canal—was called Suchinda Bridge. When the government tried to make the people go home by taking away the mobile toilets they had been using, the soldierly Chamlong suggested they dig their own trenches, to which a younger demonstrator countered that they should use plastic bags and then toss them at police headquarters. One columnist for Bangkok's *The Nation* wrote of the situation just before the violence began, "If the reason for being there had not been so serious it might almost have been fun."

"It might almost"—how difficult it is to admit straight out the happiness that people feel when they take the fate of the country into their own hands. Our political vocabulary has few words to talk about this, mainly because modern politics seeks to rule it out as a legitimate possibility. But people feel it, as is clear from the simple and powerful answers that demonstrators gave to reporters when asked why they were there: "I came here to show the people's power." "Many people have come to the rally to find out the truth." "It makes me feel good that I have been meeting people who are ready to fight for the right things."

The seven-day Long Parliament of the Streets will surely be remembered as long as anything is remembered in Thai history. Certainly it was part of the reason the police and military attacked the people so viciously. If there is anything police and military loathe and fear, it is public freedom. But equally certainly, those seven days were a great source of strength for the people in their brave opposition.

Since the democratic movement's high level of political consciousness contradicts the essential world view of Thailand's military, the troops seem simply to have been unable to believe it. *The Nation* in Bangkok reported on May 18 that one of the generals noticed among the people being arrested a young woman recognizably from a country village. He went over to her and began asking her questions in a "gentle" voice, hoping to draw out that she had been duped or paid to join the demonstration. He asked her where she was from and how long she had been at the rally, but she refused to answer. Then he asked her, "Were you recruited to join the demonstration?" The woman looked at the general and said, "You're disgusting." □

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# READING AROUND.

ELIZABETH POCHODA

### Good and Bad News Bears

The punditry business is booming in the wake of the L.A. riots, as is speculation about the freewheelin' sixties as the cause of all harm. The most peculiar set of ruminations on "what it all means" was assembled across the ocean in **The Times Literary Supplement** of May 22: A hard-right menu of Robert Leiken, Charles Murray, Irving Kristol (the mold from which Leiken and Murray were cast), Edward Luttwak and others gives a picture of relentless American decline following from the Good Society decade. These speculations precede a polemic on the corruption of universities from the ubiquitous Camille Paglia (ubiquitous because editors need to include a woman and appreciate one who can deliver an attack from the right and make it look a little like it's coming from the left). Paglia actually defends the sixties; she wants her British readers to know that American universities are in decline not because they are stocked with radicals from that decade, as conservatives have insisted, but because they have attracted "pampered fat cats who have never stood on principle at any point in their careers." Far from being subversive, these multiculturalists and politically correct types "actually represent a continuation of the genteel tradition of respectability and conformity." As usual, Paglia points out a partial truth politely ignored by others: Certain noisy leftish careerists like Professor Stanley Fish (recently profiled in *The New York Times Magazine*) were on campus but decidedly off duty when it came to political action twenty-five years ago. But so what? On that little truth is built a wildly fact-free diatribe about orthodoxy and intimidation of free speech.

### Chomsky Deconstructs P.C.

Just how faulty is the Paglia screed? Turn to the May 28 **Rolling Stone** interview with non-ubiquitous Noam Chomsky—the sort of long-term university radical, by the way, Paglia claims is extinct, and one whose views, unlike hers, are never aired on Op-Ed pages. Chomsky has this to say about the triumph of the leftist thought police: "I must have read 200 articles about this new orthodoxy taking over the universities, destroying the golden age of absolute freedom of speech. I haven't read one article defending it. If this is an orthodoxy that has taken over everything, how come *everybody* is attacking it?" Paglia enjoys seeing herself as the lone emissary from a vanquished decade. Chomsky knows otherwise: "The Sixties left an enormous legacy. Do you think there would have been a word of protest about the quincentennial if it hadn't been for the Sixties? Would there have been one person who stood up for Anita Hill and said, 'This is a form of sexual harassment'? That's why everyone hates the Sixties. It might lead to real democracy." And that's another appealing aspect of this interview: Chomsky's optimism about democracy, his belief in the basic decency of the people, in their intelligence.

### Punditmanship

To understand the very different trajectories of these two academic careers—Chomsky's moves along without benefit of talk-show appearances or publication in the mainstream press, while Paglia's is embraced everywhere—consult Eric Alterman's supremely funny "So You Want to Be a Pundit: Five Easy Steps to Fame, Fortune, and Fatuousness" in the April/May **Lingua Franca**. Paglia has followed a version of Alterman's fourth step: "Blanket the media with a contrarian view about an argument already in progress." I say a version because it is Paglia's genius to manufacture dozens of orthodoxies she can then run against. As a worthy companion to Alterman's piece, read Kathleen Quinn's equally amusing guide to media success for academics: "Courting the Great Gray Lady: Tips from a Former *Times* Op-Ed Editor."

### Name-Dropping

Before we leave the university, and as a footnote to the endless P.C. debate, the **Chronicle of Higher Education** for April 22 ran a long and detailed piece of reporting on chairwoman Lynne Cheney's politicization of the grant system at the National Endowment for the Humanities. It seems that the peer-review system as it is now set up enables Cheney to reject scholarly projects with a taint of the nontraditional (read leftist). As one former staff member pointed out, "Even a name connected to a project can kill it." Among the kiss-of-death names mentioned are those of Martin Bernal, author of *Black Athena*, the much-acclaimed study of the African roots of classical Greece, and feminist author Catharine Stimpson, a frequent talk-show adversary of Cheney. That Stimpson, a former president of the staid and oleaginous Modern Language Association who is both brilliant and well behaved, should be on an enemies list only attests to the lunacy of these polarized times.

### All in the Family

The June **Mirabella** has an interview with Richard Ben Cramer, author of the forthcoming *What It Takes: The Way to the White House*. An obsessively detailed, much-anticipated study of six of the candidates in the '88 election, Cramer's book aims at knowing and telling everything about the politically powerful. He tells **Mirabella**, "I went to the candidates' home towns. I was with their teachers. I was with their sisters and their brothers, and then I was with their mothers and cousins and aunts. I went to the family picnic. . . . By the time I get to the candidate, I'm not talking about what percent of the vote they need in Illinois—I'm talking about Aunt Gladys." Now look at the excerpt on Bush from Cramer's book in the current **Esquire** to see just what this approach yields: lots of Aunt Gladys, lots of Lester Bangs and Tom Wolfe and other leftover stuff from **Rolling Stone**'s glory days, but precious little Bush beneath it all.

### Boondoggle

The largest membership organization in America after the Catholic Church is the nonprofit American Association of Retired Persons, with 33 million elderly members and annual revenues of nearly $300 million, some of which comes from federal grants. And what does the A.A.R.P. do for its members apart from sending them issues of its magazine, **Modern Maturity**? Scandalously little, according to a searing exposé by Christopher Georges in the June **Washington Monthly**.

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# BOOKS & THE ARTS.

## History by the Neck

MICHAEL MERRILL

CUSTOMS IN COMMON. *By E.P. Thompson. New Press. 547 pp. $29.95.*

THE LONDON HANGED: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century. *By Peter Linebaugh. Cambridge. 484 pp. $44.95.*

"Why is it," Thomas Paine asked in his *Rights of Man*, "that scarcely any are executed but the poor?" Peter Linebaugh's *The London Hanged* is the definitive answer to Paine's query, but it is much else besides. Since the middle of the seventeenth century the unavoidable clash between capitalism and democracy has been one of the central themes of Anglo-American radicalism. The recently concluded cold war between private-enterprise capitalism and state-enterprise socialism was, in comparison, much younger. And now that it is over, the older, more insistently democratic strand of anticapitalist protest can at last reassert itself. We know a great deal about this tradition, thanks especially to the work of historians like Christopher Hill and E.P. Thompson. Over the past forty years, together with a small group of other New Left Marxists, they have completely changed the way we understand the modern history of the Atlantic world. Nor is this the extent of their influence. By paying as much attention to poetry as to economics, to Blake's lineaments of desire as to Marx's force fields of necessity, their work has also helped point the way toward a new, more appealing Marxism.

Master historians like Hill and Thompson have, inevitably, many students but few heirs. The appearance of *The London Hanged* confirms what aficionados have long suspected: Peter Linebaugh is one of those few. Anyone who has an abiding interest in historical writing—and is willing to make the same demands of it (and of themselves) that they make of serious fiction—will find in Linebaugh's work a great and original feast. Since first establishing his reputation in *Albion's Fatal Tree* (which he co-edited in 1975 with Thompson and Douglas Hay), Linebaugh has put only a couple of articles in the "right" publications. But out of the way places yield a number of fugitive gems. To take just three examples: In a festschrift for C.L.R. James that appeared initially as a special issue of an obscure sectarian journal, Linebaugh fantasized in believable detail how Thompson and James might have met had they both lived in eighteenth-century London; in a measured response to a skeptical critic published in a law school journal, he sketched a learned, Marxist history of plumbing; and in *Lizard Talk; or Ten Plagues and Another*, written for the 1989 anniversary celebration of Boston ACT UP, he showed how the struggle against AIDS is an indispensable aspect of international labor solidarity. In all this work (and there is more), Linebaugh demonstrates an enviable artistry and intelligence. He is easily one of the finest, most original historians now writing.

*Michael Merrill is the author of* The Key of Liberty, *with Sean Wilentz (Harvard), and* The Anti-Capitalist Origins of the United States *(Cornell), both of which will be published next year.*

*Modern economists wonder how people could survive on what they were paid. The answer is, they couldn't.*

The literary power and creative sparkle of Linebaugh's historical imagination immediately call to mind the work of his teacher, E.P. Thompson, whose long-awaited collection of essays on the eighteenth century, *Customs in Common*, has also just appeared. Thompson is familiar to *Nation* readers as a spirited campaigner on behalf of nuclear disarmament, as well as a tireless polemicist whose interventions have often appeared in the magazine. But he is also known as the person most responsible for inspiring the revival of American labor history during the past thirty years. Many historians who started out in the late 1960s and early 1970s still find his magisterial history *The Making of the English Working Class*, published in 1963, the single most important thing they ever read—even if they never got beyond the preface! *Customs in Common* is unlikely to have that impact. But it is a signal contribution nonetheless—one that, among other things, will help to vindicate Marx's famous account of "primitive accumulation" at the end of the first volume of *Capital*.

The conventional wisdom these days has come to portray eighteenth-century Britain, contra Marx, as an exemplary instance of liberty, prosperity and political stability. No other society in Europe and probably the world, so the story goes, enjoyed more freedom, created more economic opportunities (and consumer goods), or experienced fewer political upheavals than Georgian England. *Customs in Common* departs sharply from this complacent view. Thompson, following Marx, sees the eighteenth century as a battleground. But where Marx emphasized the conflict between smallholders and capitalists, Thompson draws attention to the continuing confrontations between "an innovative market economy" dominated by moneyed men and what he calls the "moral economy of the plebs"—a set of longstanding, widely accepted, mutually reinforcing social relationships and reciprocal obligations between a local community and the farmers, millers, bakers and other purveyors who supplied it with food. By providing a fuller sense of the way of life capitalism destroyed, *Customs in Common* helps us understand why the resistance to it was so protracted and tenacious.

Thompson is concerned primarily with relationships among the great landed proprietors and the small farmers and customary tenants in the countryside who lived in their shadows. For insight into the conflict between the expanding money economy and Britain's rapidly growing urban population, we must turn to Linebaugh. He frames his argument against the revolutionary—and counterrevolutionary—events of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The English Revolution of 1640 ushered in a period of unparalleled freedom for the general populace—freedom that the aristocratic elite struggled mightily to repress for the next several decades. In the standard accounts of the period, the Hanoverian accession of 1714 represented the crowning moment of their efforts because it brought, at last, peace and good order both to Eng-

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land and to its recently acquired empire. As Linebaugh notes, however, echoing Thompson (and of course Marx), this "growth of political stability" was accompanied by the expansion of the slave trade in Africa, the consolidation of slavery in the Americas and an increase in state-sanctioned terror in England.

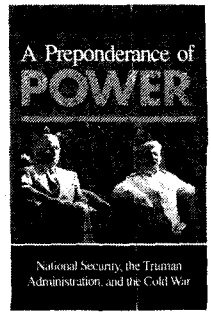
The living memory of the freedoms promised by the revolution, the international character of the elite's counterrevolution and the popular resistance to the various forms of repression employed by Britain's restored and emboldened aristocracy all play a part in Linebaugh's argument. But he focuses on "the relationship between the organized death of living labour (capital punishment) and the oppression of the living by dead labour (the punishment of capital)." In the eighteenth century, the hanging tree at Tyburn was an important weapon in the struggle between the various representatives of capital and labor—aristocracy, bourgeoisie, plebeians and proletarians—over how much control would be exerted, by whom, over which aspects of the different processes of production. *The London Hanged* shows in convincing detail how the courts and the gallows aided the Whig elite's assault on the traditional perquisites, customs and property rights of the populace.

In the eighteenth century, workers generally—including those employed in the most commercial operations of the era—depended on a variety of customary, nonmonetary appropriations. Latter-day economists, looking back at the wage records of eighteenth-century enterprises, have wondered how people could survive on what they were supposedly paid. The answer was, they couldn't. The great majority of working people pieced together a living from a variety of different sources, including a series of more or less legitimate customary rights to appropriate a portion of the materials with which they worked. Weavers, for example, could claim their "cabbage" (the irregular portions of cloth left over after a pattern has been cut), and shipwrights had their "chips" (scrap lumber generated in shipbuilding). Farm laborers had gleaning rights when harvesting grain and dockworkers had "socking" rights when unloading tobacco. The income of these customary takings, for most working people, spelled the difference between managing to get by and starving.

By defining such customs as criminal—and underscoring the seriousness and majesty of its resolve by making relatively small-scale thefts capital offenses—the elite mobilized the whole power of the state, through its criminal justice apparatus, against the traditional property rights of the poor. Thus did capital punishment assist the "punishment of capital," founded on the expropriation of the poor. That enclosures and other takings in the countryside deprived the poor of their property is well known. Thanks to Linebaugh we now also know a great deal about a previously hidden, parallel expropriation in the cities—in the service of which the moneyed elite redefined the nature of workers' customary use-rights in the production process.

Linebaugh's earlier contribution to *Albion's Fatal Tree* already challenged the time-honored distinction between a "criminal" and a "respectable" working class. The material presented in *The London Hanged* reinforces that conclusion. Even more striking, the close attention Linebaugh pays to actual forms of payment in the period underscores the similarities among the experiences of African-American slaves, Irish farm laborers, domestic workers and wives, and skilled artisans, journeymen and other laborers in London. None of these groups characteristically received regular monetary payments for their labor; all of them had to supplement their livelihood by helping themselves to the riches around them. Some of these takings were legitimate customs of the trade; others were less widely recognized. All of them played an important part in the work process. In such circumstances, distinctions between "free" and "unfree" labor, and between household and factory, which are so important to the history of the nineteenth-century working class, did not cut nearly as deep.

Another of Linebaugh's arresting discoveries is the important influence Irish and African-American workers exercised within the London working class as a whole. For example, Irish dockworkers took the lead in the insurrections of 1768—which coincided with, but cannot be reduced to, the Wilkesite agitation of the same year. The leadership of African-Americans is even less well known. But in the Gordon Riots of June 1780, they played a decisive role in the liberation of Newgate and in other actions. A decade later, Olaudah Equiano, an escaped slave and leader of the London African-American community who was one of England's principal abolitionists, helped to organize the meeting that Thompson, in *The Making of the English Working*


**A Preponderance of Power**

NATIONAL SECURITY, THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION, AND THE COLD WAR

**Melvyn P. Leffler**

"Brilliant.... For sheer comprehensiveness and thorough investigation, this volume is unmatched. It is also miraculously literate, thought-provoking, and quite surprising in its line of argument."—Carolyn Eisenberg, *The Nation*. "A magisterial new history.... The best book anyone has yet written on the United States and the origins of the Cold War."—John Lewis Gaddis, *The Atlantic*. "Describes in careful and fascinating detail how mostly responsible and prudent bureaucrats from the executive branch, weapons-hungry generals and admirals, and partisan legislators fought among themselves and with one another about proper cost-beneficial strategies to combat an exaggerated Soviet menace [and] helped to exaggerate that menace as they jockeyed for favored position in the budget wars."— *The Detroit Free Press*. 728 pp., illus. $29.95

**Democratic Values and Technological Choices**

**Stuart Hill**

Democratic societies face two related problems when making decisions on complex, controversial technologies such as dams and nuclear power plants: learning what their citizens' views are and defining the role that those views should play in making the ultimate decision. The author develops and tests a theory of how citizens judge complex technologies, using the controversy over the California's Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant as a test case. 300 pp. $35.00

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*Class*, has described as the inaugural moment of the nineteenth-century working-class movement.

*The London Hanged* ends with the birth of this new movement. During the 1790s, the irregular payments and customary appropriations that had mediated employment relations over the previous period were increasingly replaced, especially in the larger and better-managed enterprises, by regular wage payments. As a result, the focus of working-class struggle changed from the defense of customary appropriations to demands for "wages" and the "rights of man." It is an understatement to say that Linebaugh is unhappy with this shift. The imposition of regular wages simultaneously sharpened and concealed the differences between paid and unpaid labor, men and women, adults and children, free and slave labor, making relations between these groups all the more difficult and violent. In the end, capitalists had no need of the gallows to enforce labor discipline and protect the rights of private property. The working class—divided, embittered, overworked and underpaid—could be turned murderously on itself, as in the climax of a Punch and Judy show.

God knows there is a lot to this. But there is also reason to hope that the unities of the eighteenth century might someday be reconstituted on a different and more lasting basis. As Immanuel Wallerstein has suggested in his insightful essay "Historical Capitalism," the proletarianization of the work force and the spread of the wage system has generally been a demand, not a defeat, of the working-class movement. Most people prefer a wage guaranteed by law to a nebulous right of customary appropriation—witness the continuing demands for waged jobs by women and other members of the unpaid labor force. Since the late nineteenth century, most socialists have sharply condemned the wage system and sought to replace it with something better. Most workers, however, have preferred instead to keep the system and organize within it to secure a larger and larger share of the social product. Continually demanding higher wages in this way enacts a different set of solidarities, extending workers' entitlements from the particular "material circuits of production" described by Linebaugh to the more general monetary circuits of finance and control characteristic of a capitalist economy. The result is not socialism in the opinion of most intellectuals, who characteristically prefer to give more power to bureaucrats than to working people. But it may be the only authentic, fully proletarian socialism we have had or ever will have—a socialism in which workers themselves have the greatest power and freedom. □

# Those Were the Days

MICHAEL ROSENFELD

THE PATIENT IMPATIENCE. *By Tomás Borge. Translated by Russell Bartley, Darwin J. Flakoll and Sylvia Yoneda. Curbstone Press. 452 pp. $24.95.*

When Tomás Borge was a student at the Matagalpa Boys High School in Nicaragua (which must have been the mid-1940s), the dictator Anastasio Somoza García came for a visit, and Tomás refused to shake his hand. So did Carlos Fonseca, his schoolmate, who would go on to become the greatest Sandinista leader; Carlos looked ahead when the dictator offered him his hand. The school principal was deeply embarrassed.

In this meditation on the Nicaraguan revolution—part memoir, part documentary history—Borge illustrates with great tenderness how the culture of popular resistance in Nicaragua, which had manifested itself earlier in the form of famous patriots like Augusto César Sandino (who beat the U.S. Marines in the late 1920s) and Benjamin Zeledón (who led a rebellion against the U.S. Marines in 1912 and was killed after refusing to surrender), remained alive. It was a natural resource. The Sandinista revolution, cleverly and appropriately named after the martyred hero, was an entirely Nicaraguan answer to the problems of life under a U.S.-supported dictatorship. At the heart of Borge's story is an argument for authenticity: The Sandinista revolution was as native to Nicaragua as the corn of Chontales or the poetry of Rubén Darío, despite aid and training from foreign sources, including Cuba. The youth of Nicaragua were unwilling to submit to Somoza's authority, and that was the heart of what became the Sandinista revolution.

In the 1950s Fonseca and Borge became two of the leading dissident students in the Nicaraguan university system, publishing radical newspapers and holding demonstrations. By this time the local authorities knew well enough to put Carlos and Tomás in jail for a night whenever Somoza happened to be passing through town. Borge relates with more than a little pride that the National Guard always saved the smallest and most uncomfortable cell, Number 21, for him.

In 1956 a schoolmate of Borge's, Rigoberto López Pérez, assassinated Somoza, giving up his own life in the process. It was an act that sparked severe repression throughout Nicaragua, as well as armed clashes between the Guard and irregular, poorly armed rebel forces throughout the countryside. All over the country there were unrehearsed and uncoordinated acts of resistance. Borge spent his first lengthy time in jail, convicted of prior knowledge of the assassination attempt, a charge he did not deny.

The transition from student radical to guerrilla fighter seems not to have been a decisive moment for Borge; student groups were being repressed and destroyed by the Guard, and Borge simply joined with friends who were already forming guerrilla units in rural areas. Many other Nicaraguans made the same choice, so that around 1961, when the Sandinista National Liberation Front was formed, there were a number of small independent groups that had taken up arms against the dictatorship. Borge's decision to join the armed struggle seems to have been a result of his imprisonment; he couldn't exactly return to school. This, at any rate, is as much as we can glean from his book, because *The Patient Impatience* is not a personal narrative, as is Omar Cabezas's *Fire From the Mountain*; Borge instead observes, noting and interpreting the lives and motivations of others.

During the early years of the revolution many Sandinista leaders were killed in disastrous military failures. First there was El Chaparral, then the Coco River, then Pancasán; time and again the undernourished and underarmed guerrillas found themselves with rusted or jammed weapons, with bad cases of mountain leprosy and with little hope of beating a well-armed enemy. It took the Sandinistas many years to develop a network of support among the rural peasants, who could warn the guerrillas when the National Guard was moving in.

Over the course of many failed campaigns, each of which allowed the dicta-

*Michael Rosenfeld is a writer living in Chicago.*

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torship to gloat that the last remnants of resistance had been wiped out, the Sandinistas reorganized. Their initial strategy of withdrawing from Nicaragua to reorganize and then re-entering the country in armed bands to engage National Guard troops proved futile. New leaders, including the Ortega brothers, came into the movement with different strategies. Borge, who was at the center of the ideological battles for the future of the Sandinista movement, has chosen to leave all of this internal politics (some of which was quite rancorous) out of *The Patient Impatience*.

What we do know from other sources is that the younger generation of leaders, led by Daniel, Humberto and Camilo Ortega, had a vision of an urban revolution based on strikes, uprisings and opportunistic ties with the middle class. In 1979, just months before the victory, the Sandinistas had only about 250 armed militants, but they received the support of thousands of ordinary citizens in defeating Somoza's powerful National Guard.

Borge proves in some isolated parts of *The Patient Impatience* that he is a better writer than he was a guerrilla fighter. He is able to conjure some of the spirit of the greatest Latin American writers, such as Gabriel García Márquez, when he brings together the natural, the supernatural and the sexual powers that shape people's lives, as in this description of the great earthquake of 1972:

> In any event, that day—or rather that night—the giant stirred twice, which doesn't often happen, and each time he yawned and stretched he shattered 33,000 homes in Managua like a castle of cards constructed by a Peruvian sorceress, killing almost 10,000 people and rending the earth's surface over an area of 27,000 square kilometers. At that hour, people were sleeping, studying topography and chemistry, healing sores, fixing flat tires, telling fortunes, assassinating Sandinistas, selling tomatoes, cheating their neighbors or looting public coffers, making love, smoking Sphynx cigarettes, weaving hammocks and poems, opposing Somoza, watching horror movies, bathing, ordaining that butterflies should define brilliance, struggling against the established order.

*The Patient Impatience* received the 1989 Casa de las Américas Award for testimony (*Fire From the Mountain* won the same prize in 1982), even though much of the book is not the personal testimony of Tomás Borge. At the end of many chapters, Borge offers documents of historical importance, such as the statement


# The New Peoples College

A specter is haunting America. Ever increasing millions of its citizens are fearful of the future, loathing of the banal mediocrity of their politicians, and feeling powerless in the face of the steady deterioration of their living standards and life quality.

**The future of young Americans looks bleak.** The present recession is increasingly, if only vaguely, perceived as the harbinger of general crisis. The bill for Reaganomics - it did not begin or end with Reagan - is coming up for payment. The poor, middle America, and especially the present young generation will be called upon to pay it.

**Apathetic restlessness will turn to anger, and demand for fundamental change.** Such a scenario will bring new opportunities for social activists but also for demagogic populists like Duke and Buchanan.

**We desperately need a new generation of radical humanists, young in body or spirit - long distance runners in the fight for social change.** They need to be resistant to being crushed or co-opted by the system, open to new ideas, but shunning ideology. And perhaps, above all, learn that the life of a committed activist is richly rewarding, not one of self-sacrifice.

**To this end we propose to develop a college which will serve as a training center for such people.** It is too early to spell out in detail the courses of study and curricula. Students and faculty will help determine these. But certain main features and guiding principles can now be laid down. There will be vocational training as well as academic courses. Carpentry, cooking, raising food crops and car maintenance will be part of the work day and directly applied in the development and maintenance of a campus, and feeding of students and faculty. Tuition will be minimal and faculty will be expected to work for room and board.

History, philosophy and literature will be offered as well as courses in the arts. Emphasis will be placed on the arts of communication and students will study and practice public speaking, writing of articles, leaflets and pamphlets and the use of still and video photography - so too with organizing strategy and tactics.

We have no illusions about the enormous difficulties that beset our path - no guarantees of success. **We firmly believe that the effort is necessary and are passionately committed to giving it a good try.** To that end we dedicate all our energies and resources, but we need your generous support.

## We Need Land

Our first need is a site for building a campus.
Part of this must be suitable for raising food crops.
The climate must be warm, or at least temperate;
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## Can You Help?

**Abe Osheroff**

Veteran of Abraham Lincoln Brigade; 60 years of social activism; Organizer of trade unions, of unemployed councils; Led the fight for Peoples' Park of LA; Civil rights Mississippi - '64; Organizer of Lincoln Brigade to build co-op housing in Nicaragua; Prizewinning film maker; Taught history at Jefferson School of Social Science and UCLA; Lectured at 200 Universities.

**Steve Kerpen**

Architect, 25 years social activism in Harlem, with farm workers in California and in Nicaragua; advocacy planning, low-income housing, community organizing, international aid and development. Founder / Director, APSNICA - sent over 600 volunteers to Nicaragua to provide technical assistance and build houses, schools, water systems, warehouses and health posts.

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read over the radio by the Sandinistas in 1974 when they took many of Anastasio Somoza Debayle's cronies hostage in a daring raid on a Christmas party; selections from the writings of Carlos Fonseca, including the famous *From Prison I Accuse the Dictatorship*; and the original Constitution of the Sandinista front. These archival texts are mixed with letters and impressions, such as the love letter that Borge sent to the wrong woman; a letter to the literary magazine *Ventana* (which operated in Nicaragua in the early 1960s) from Sergio Ramírez, who turned out to be, like Borge, not only a Sandinista leader but also a writer of considerable stature; and even the recorded impressions of *The Nation*'s Carleton Beals, one of the few Western journalists who traveled with Sandino's crazy little army. The use of these different voices allows Borge's own voice to wander, which it does marvelously, crossing from experience to dreams to collective memory.

*The Patient Impatience*, originally published in Nicaragua in 1989, is dedicated to Carlos Fonseca. (The title is a reference to Fonseca's legendary studiousness; the image of him in Nicaragua's murals is of a man with big eyes, thick glasses and quiet intensity.) Fonseca was killed in battle while Borge was serving a long jail sentence, just three years before the Sandinista triumph. While in jail, Borge wrote *Carlos, the Dawn Is No Longer Beyond Reach*. *The Patient Impatience* is basically an expanded version of *Carlos*. What was added in the intervening years was the poetry and the documentation.

Like *Carlos*, *The Patient Impatience* ends in 1978, with Borge in Somoza's Tipitapa jail. This was a time just before the dawn, when a prescient Borge could sense that even though Fonseca had been killed and Borge himself was in jail, the Somoza dictatorship was close to collapse. ("The enemy said we were all dead and not a one of us was dead," he writes.) Borge was eventually sprung from jail when the Sandinistas, led by their future enemy Edén Pastora, seized the National Palace—including the national legislature—in a daring raid in August 1978.

*The Patient Impatience* ends at a point that leaves many questions unanswered. It was only after 1979, of course, that Borge became known to the outside world as the supposedly hard-line Interior Minister of Nicaragua. He had a flair for the poetic, yet he was saddled with the entirely prosaic chore of managing the prisons and the secret police while Daniel Ortega, a man not noted for his lyrical inspiration, managed the state. Various commentators believe that Ortega beat out Borge for the top job because it had been Ortega's urban-insurrection strategy that brought the Sandinistas to victory in 1979. But Borge discusses none of this. The Sandinista leaders, who came of age as disciplined clandestine guerrillas, have never shared their secrets even with the Nicaraguan public, so much of their internal history remains shrouded. Perhaps one day Borge, the sole surviving founder of the F.S.L.N., will be ready to tell a fuller story.

Since the appearance of *The Patient Impatience*, Borge has published a book of poems, titled *La Ceremonia Esperada*. These are an interesting mix of erotic, political, hopeful and strangely threatening poems. One chapter is called "The Dictatorship of the Rainbow," which may be intended as a metaphor for Sandinista rule. Borge has also produced a number of highly provocative, engagingly written articles—mostly interviews with Latin American political figures—for Mexican magazines and newspapers.

On February 25, 1990, a writer from the Mexican magazine *Proceso* followed Borge around Nicaragua to observe what was expected to be a Sandinista victory at the polls. Borge was not so sure:

> Borge: This has been the toughest moment. The waiting. It makes me anxious. It's as if you were standing at the corner, waiting for a woman you love, and she doesn't come. And you look at your watch and she doesn't come. And you get anxious.
>
> *Proceso*: That happens when one isn't sure the woman loves you.
>
> Borge: That could be, that could be. That is: the doubt. □

# Hip Con

DANNY GOLDBERG

GIVE WAR A CHANCE: Eyewitness Accounts of Mankind's Struggle Against Tyranny, Injustice and Alcohol-Free Beer. *By P.J. O'Rourke. Atlantic Monthly. 233 pp. $20.95.*

PARLIAMENT OF WHORES: A Lone Humorist Attempts to Explain the Entire U.S. Government. *By P.J. O'Rourke. Vintage. 233 pp. Paper $12.*

The day John Lennon died he gave a radio interview in which he ridiculed a type of sixties activist who had turned sour on activism a decade later: "We're just gonna play rock and roll and not do anything else," said Lennon, impersonating a disillusioned hippie, whining like a spoiled child. "We're gonna stay in our rooms, and the world is a nasty horrible place 'cause it didn't give us everything we cried for." P.J. O'Rourke has fashioned a successful career pandering to the selfishness and alienation of the kind of people Lennon was describing. What Norman Podhoretz was to fiftysomething Jewish intellectuals who wanted a rationale for their romance with the Reagan Administration, O'Rourke has become for baby boomers in search of justification for apathy or Republicanism.

*Danny Goldberg is chair of the A.C.L.U. Foundation of Southern California and senior vice president of Atlantic Records.*

The title of O'Rourke's *Give War a Chance* (which reached number one on the *New York Times* nonfiction best-seller list for several weeks in May) mocks Lennon's famous antiwar anthem. As a stylist O'Rourke is a Hunter Thompson wannabe who uses four-letter words, rock and roll references, first-person wisecracks and pseudo–free association as packaging for stark Social Darwinism. Much of *Give War a Chance* and last year's best seller, *Parliament of Whores*, originally appeared as articles in *Rolling Stone*.

A typical chapter is titled: "Our Government: What the Fuck Do They Do All Day and Why Does It Cost So Goddamned Much Money?" Although his *Give War a Chance* book jacket describes him portentously as "the preeminent political humorist of our time," O'Rourke's favorite form of "satire" is name-calling. Homeless activists are "angry black poverty pests." Liberals are the "giveaway and guilt bunch" or "the kind of creepy misfits who join mass movements." Social Security recipients are "fuddy-duddies and mossbacks." Environmentalists are "neo-hippie-dips . . . , sentimentality-crazed iguana anthropomorphizers" and "Chicken Littles." William Kunstler has "eyebrows the size of squirrels . . . [and is] wearing a hobo literature-professor-type suit no doubt carefully pre-rumpled at the special Pinko Dry Cleaner and Valet." O'Rourke refers to meeting a "dandruffy waiter" in Kiev and describes Americans in Nicaragua as "big, home-

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ly . . . American girls in stained T-shirts and dweeby little chicken-necked American boys in ripped jeans."

Juvenile though he is, O'Rourke is an effective propagandist with astute insight into the dark side of the id of the sixties generation. Like his hero, the late Republican chairman Lee Atwater, O'Rourke has a passion for the negative. His style becomes dry and dull when he describes his purported enthusiasms such as the Gulf War, to which he devotes several chapters written from Saudi Arabia. His writing comes alive only when de-legitimizing liberalism. In his latest book he actually compiles an "enemies" list of liberals who he says represent what is worst in America, under the rubric "A Call for a New McCarthyism" (the list includes, needless to say, *The Nation*).

Baby-boom neocons do not want to feel guilty, so propagandists like O'Rourke cannot brazenly suggest enrichment of 1 percent at the expense of the other 99 percent, or comfort for the middle-aged at the expense of their children and parents. His pitch, like that of conservative talk-radio superstar Rush Limbaugh, is that nothing else works except an unobstructed free market. Government doesn't work, liberalism doesn't work, compassion doesn't work. He "proves" this by attending a session of Congress, spending an hour at the Supreme Court, going to an Earth Day march and to a march for the homeless, to a housing project in Newark and to other "left" events and quoting the shallowest and most inane remarks he can hear. This is the intellectual equivalent of judging modern conservatism by the people who attend David Duke and Pat Buchanan rallies, but O'Rourke's faux-gonzo style has led some critics to excuse his distortions as mere "irreverence."

If yuppies actually believe O'Rourke's caricature of liberalism, they can delude themselves into believing they are decent citizens even as they contribute to the deterioration of society. This philosophy is summarized in the preface to *Parliament of Whores* in his glib distinction between the major parties, "Why God Is a Republican and Santa Claus Is a Democrat." God, according to O'Rourke, "holds men strictly accountable for their actions" and "has little apparent concern for the material well-being of the disadvantaged." Santa Claus, on the other hand, "gives everyone everything they want without thought of a quid pro quo" and "is preferable to God in every way but one: There is no such thing as Santa Claus." Evidently O'Rourke would have his readers believe that there are also no such things as interstate highways, Medicare, post offices, police departments, etc. The God that O'Rourke believes in will rely on the "free market" to restrain polluters and is totally unconcerned about teaching children to read if they are unable to afford private school. The Santa Claus metaphor makes O'Rourke more of a mutant neo-Calvinist than a neoconservative. His logic should reject George Bush's "thousand points of light" as a privatized version of fairy tales. His readers, in other words, are encouraged to believe that not only are taxes counterproductive but so is charity. As the Church Lady says on *Saturday Night Live*, how convenient.

*O'Rourke wants to make conservatism palatable to rock fans, but he is as hip as Jesse Helms.*

In *Give War a Chance*, O'Rourke directly confronts the source of all baby-boomer liberal evil under the title "What I Believed in the Sixties." In the list that follows he begins with the word: "Everything," followed by a litany of absurdities that no one actually believed: that "Mao was cute. . . . [that] Lyndon Johnson was plotting to murder all the Negroes. . . . [that] wearing my hair long would end poverty and injustice. . . . [that] my parents were Nazi space monsters." He follows this by disclosing "What Caused Me to Have Second Thoughts." O'Rourke worked for an underground newspaper in Baltimore and a Maoist group attacked the paper and held the staff hostage overnight. He ends with "What I Believe Now: Nothing." He hastens to reassure the reader that he does in fact believe in "Western civilization," and then quotes the opening lines of the Declaration of Independence as if they somehow contradicted the civil rights and antiwar movements of the sixties.

Of course this is really an elaborate rationalization for the kind of narcissism spoofed by the comedian who determines his politics based on "what's good for me—Al Franken." The truth about O'Rourke is that he was probably attracted to liberal ideas in the sixties when


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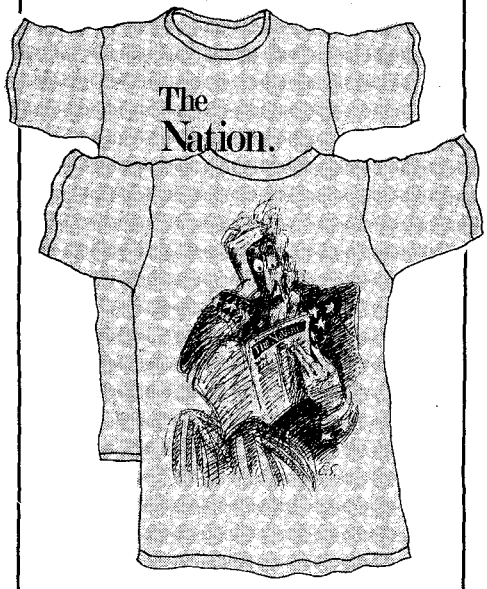


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mouthing progressive phrases was the best way to meet girls and to work your way into the media through the alternative press. His second thoughts probably came around the time that Ronald Reagan was elected and conservatism represented access to power and money. His current beliefs are designed to get more access to more power and more money.

Ultimately, however, it is a stretch to be both hip and conservative. O'Rourke sycophantically rhapsodizes about the r&b music at George Bush's inaugural ball: "The president of the United States—a Republican president—is going to be pulled up on stage by Sam Moore of Sam and Dave." O'Rourke climaxes: "When President Bush entered the auditorium, no one played 'Hail to the Chief.' Instead, the 1967 Bar-Keys instrumental 'Soul Finger' had been chosen as the presidential theme." (As it happens, the name of the group is the Bar-Kays.) O'Rourke inadvertently reveals how much ass he must kiss when he calls Lee Atwater's guitar playing "excellent." One listen to Atwater's vanity album will convince even the most casual *Rolling Stone* reader that the guy couldn't have gotten a job in a bar band unless his father owned the bar.

For progressives to thrive in the nineties, it is not enough to despise O'Rourke as much as he despises us. The reasons his books sell so well include the fact that few political thinkers on the left bother to speak the language of popular culture, or speak to the distinctive set of cultural and political dramas that baby-boomers have experienced. The image of George Bush and Lee Atwater posing with electric guitars next to real musicians was designed to do the same thing that O'Rourke is trying to do: make conservatism palatable to rock fans. Forget that if George Bush's vote on the 1964 Civil Rights Act had prevailed, Sam Moore still wouldn't be allowed in the same bathroom as P.J. Forget that Bush was head of the Republican Party when Richard Nixon's Justice Department tried to get John Lennon thrown out of the country. Forget that Bush's first "drug czar," William Bennett, said the Woodstock festival was one of the most evil events in modern history, and that the new drug czar, Bob Martinez, is the guy who as Governor of Florida boasted that his policies caused Luther Campbell of 2 Live Crew to be taken to jail in handcuffs, while white pornographers in the same neighborhood went untouched. Forget all these things and everything you ever believed in, because caring about them is for losers and suckers. Smoke pot if you want to, take care of your own and to hell with everybody else. This is O'Rourke's not very subtle subtext, and he is as hip as Jesse Helms. □

# FILMS.

STUART KLAWANS

**Pictures From a Revolution**
**Poison Ivy**
**Cannes '92**

Your correspondent recently returned from the Cannes Film Festival to find America on its knees, rapt before the sight of *Lethal Weapon 3* flexing its mighty grosses. Who could resist those rippling box-office reports, that massive gate? Casting off jet lag, I impatiently thrust my $7.50 at the cashier and in the aftermath felt only slightly saddened, having been used, but not so thoroughly as I'd wanted.

The previous *Lethal Weapon*—the film I had in effect paid to see again—was of course the finest low-comedy car-chase movie ever to offer both antiapartheid propaganda and bisexual, biracial romance. *LW3* is by comparison a lead-footed and dispirited affair, despite the welcome addition of Rene Russo as a kung-fu-fighting heroine. In the wake of recent events, even she could not make me laugh at Los Angeles cops who smack people just for the fun of it. Maybe word of mouth on *LW3* will cool the public's ardor; maybe the box office will shrink, like a weight lifter pissing away his steroids. No matter—the new *Batman* will soon be here, its opening weekend athrob with swollen receipts. So before that happens and the silly season engulfs us, let me recommend a couple of worthwhile films you can see now, and let me also describe a few you might discover, with luck, sometime in the future.

*Pictures From a Revolution*, by Susan Meiselas, Richard P. Rogers and Alfred Guzzetti, is rich in qualities you can't find in any of the *Lethal Weapons*. It's quiet, thoughtful, moving and well crafted. What's more, the gunfire it documents was real. In 1978, Meiselas went to Nicaragua as a photojournalist; she gained the Sandinistas' trust and recorded their fight against the Somoza regime. A decade later, after the Sandinistas were voted out of power, Meiselas returned, bringing a film crew and a well-worn copy of her book of photographs, *Nica-*

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*ragua*. She intended to locate the people whom she'd photographed during the revolution—a plan as effective as it was simple, since Nicaraguans are as eager as anybody else to see pictures of themselves. You watch as they gather around Meiselas and her book, laughing and pointing and shaking their heads. Then, one by one, they reveal to her the devastation of their country and their own disillusionment.

Anyone with a gram of political sophistication could predict what these witnesses will say: Behind their exhaustion and sense of futility lies the horror of the *contra* war. It's a good explanation—and a lot of good it does the Nicaraguans. Although few would doubt the justice of their revolt or the injustice of the United States response, they now find themselves at a decidedly unheroic moment in the revolutionary cycle, scraping by day to day and trying to survive economically and morally. The power of *Pictures From a Revolution*—a power perhaps unique to film—is that it grants you a small share of the knowledge that Nicaraguans bought with their blood. Substituting lived experience for bare abstraction, the movie lets you look into these people's faces, hear their tones of voice, see the houses where they live and the food they eat. You're plunged into the difficult present; yet all the while the past is alive, too, in the recollections prompted by old photographs and in Meiselas's own meditations on her work.

Although *Pictures From a Revolution* concentrates, as it should, on the subjects of the photographs, the photographer unavoidably becomes part of the story as well. She, too, risked her neck during the revolution, but unlike the Sandinistas, she was free to go away. At least implicitly, her film weighs the question of how deeply any outsider—whether a photojournalist or a moviegoer—can share the lives of Nicaraguan peasants. How much truth did Meiselas capture in her pictures (then and now)? How much escaped her, and how much did she unwittingly falsify? Reflecting on one famous image—her shot of a guerrilla with a rifle in one hand and a firebomb in the other—Meiselas comments on how a chunk of time, once frozen on film, may gain affective power precisely because it loses the context that gave it meaning. The image in this case seemed to take on a life of its own, multiplying and changing forms and serving both the Sandinistas and their opponents. It's a case of reality turning into a slogan—a process that Meise-

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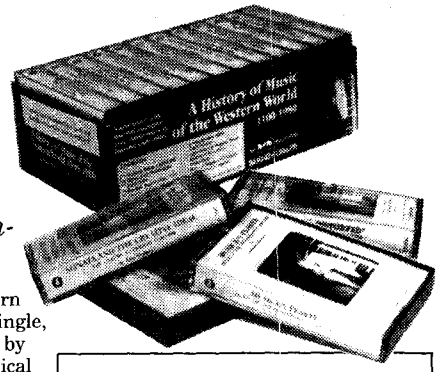

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las and her collaborators have done much to reverse in *Pictures From a Revolution*.

Apart from novel uses for power tools, what can we learn from the modern horror film? Carol J. Clover sets out to answer that question in her engrossing new book, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws* (Princeton, $19.95), in which she looks closely and sympathetically at slasher, demonic-possession and rape-revenge movies and discovers in them evidence of a shift in the (mostly male) audience's attitude toward gender. To caricature Clover's smart and nuanced argument: There is ample reason to believe that fans of these subgenres identify with the female victim as much or more than they do with the male victimizer and that their pleasure in watching arises not from sadism but masochism. As her clinching evidence for a cultural shift, Clover points to the transition of these subgenres from low-budget squalor to bourgeois respectability—*A Nightmare on Elm Street* has become *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Ms. 45* has turned into *Thelma & Louise*.

If Clover is right, I hope she will soon give us her thoughts on the latest subgenre to emerge in horror films: what we might call the Killer Magdalene movie. The most successful of these at the box office has been *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle*, with Rebecca de Mornay in the central role. She is both lunatic avenger and wronged woman, creep-show monster and beautiful ingénue. She could not be so efficiently deadly were she not also trustworthy and vulnerable—a woman who would *of course* be hired as a nanny and taken into a home without anyone's bothering to check her references. Other killers are marked by some disfigurement, but the only physical sign that distinguishes de Mornay's character is a wetness at the nipples. The symbol of both her menace and her suffering is her need to nurse a child.

No doubt *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* will define the Killer Magdalene for most audiences, but I've been much more taken with a recent entry in the subgenre, *Poison Ivy*, directed by Detroit's own Katt Shea and written by Shea and Andy Ruben.

Whereas *Cradle* was best when it was goofiest, with de Mornay popping her baby blues like a mesmerized Barbie, *Poison Ivy* is languorous, dreamy, febrile—as emotionally unsettled as its teenage protagonists, and similarly stuck on its own image. Sara Gilbert, known to TV audiences as the wisemouthed adolescent on *Roseanne*, is cast here as a wisemouthed adolescent—a lonely rich girl in Los Angeles who has developed a crush on her high school's bad girl, played by that bad girl of the tabloid press, Drew Barrymore. As in *Cradle*, this vicious innocent talks her way into the home of her prey, where she spends the rest of the movie taking possession of whatever she can and destroying what she can't. But the difference between Barrymore's character and de Mornay's is as profound as the difference in tone between the two films. De Mornay has become a Killer Magdalene because of sufferings imposed by a melodramatic plot. Barrymore becomes a Killer Magdalene simply because she is poor.

The dirty secret that's played out in *Poison Ivy* isn't Sara Gilbert's muted lust for Drew Barrymore, or even the competing lust of Gilbert's dad (played by an agonized and oily Tom Skerritt). The secret is that the poor girl truly loves these rich people and will give them whatever they

FROM NORTH PHILLY

I do know this:
Somebody must've dropped the bomb
Yet they say no war has been fought here.

Grasses grow in the city streets
and fireflies come in swarms this summer
glowing fluorescently sharp
lighting on the heads of infants.
Everything out of order
—the slow drift of mangled cars
—the stillness of mangled bodies
has become order.

They say no war has been fought here
but the eyes of dead slumping buildings
are invaded by irreverent birds
and my head floats five feet over my neck
in the distant city
with the green bitch in the harbor.

And we lay homeless with hollow eyes
among the high-tech rubble
at the mouth of fouled rivers
at the ends of alleys, near railroad tracks
in the path of quickly advancing troops.

But no.
There are no soldiers
and they say no war has been fought here.

It's just another Buddha-belly
coming to collect the rent
It's just the mice in the walls
trapped and singing like Michael Jackson
starving cheerleaders,
poisoned, dying
singing death songs.

Whatever they say, I do know this:
Here in this chamber, in the bowels
of the city, in the flat stench of Sharpeville
in the villages of Haiti
they split you side to side
with pretty-pretty bayonets.
The tiny blood vessels never link hands again.
And your rivers
never run
quite like before.

*Esther Iverem*

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seem to want—and the rich girl hates her for it. Maybe you'll be able to figure out at the end who's really the victim in the story. I couldn't, any more than I could predict how the frequently explosive scenes would develop. All I can tell you for sure is that this odd, obsessive little movie came to me as a surprise, right down to its attitude toward cinema history. Most directors of thrillers take time out from the story to quote from *Psycho* (or, lately, *Vertigo*). When Katt Shea gets to the turning point in *her* thriller, she suddenly produces a Milk-Bone biscuit, a dog with divided loyalties—and an homage to *The Awful Truth*.

My *Nation* T-shirt—only $11.95 postpaid—drew admiring glances along the Croisette at this year's Cannes Film Festival, where *Nation* contributing editor Gore Vidal turned out to have scooped me on the industry buzz. In the January 27 issue he revealed his role in *Bob Roberts*, an election-year satire about a folk-singing, right-wing millionaire. Four months later, *Bob Roberts* became one of the popular and critical hits of the Directors' Fortnight section of Cannes. You read it here first.

Written and directed by Tim Robbins, who also plays the lead role, composed the songs and (for all I know) did the catering, *Bob Roberts* is one of the rare works that expand the English language. Dickens added Scrooge to our vocabulary; Tim Robbins contributes Bob Roberts, a much-needed new term for the conservative politician who poses as a rebel. In concert scenes and music videos (many of them ingeniously copied from D.A. Pennebaker's portrait of Bob Dylan, *Don't Look Back*), Bob Roberts lauds the virtues of Wall Street, mocks altruism and advocates lynching as a good solution to the spread of drugs. These sentiments prove strangely attractive to the owners of TV stations and newspapers, who allow Roberts just a wee editorial advantage as he campaigns for the Senate against a liberal incumbent (Gore Vidal). Sharp, funny and amazingly assured for a first directorial effort, *Bob Roberts* is certain to liven up not just the film schedule but the 1992 elections as well. Keep an eye out for it, and for Vidal, who holds his own against some very hot actors.

Of the other American films that had their premieres at Cannes, the one to watch for is *Mac*, directed by and starring John Turturro with a script by Turturro and Brandon Cole. A crowd-pleaser in the most honorable sense, *Mac* is the story of a family of construction workers in Queens in the early 1950s. It's not as ambitious a film as *Bob Roberts*, nor is it quite as well crafted; as a first-time director, Turturro had some minor problems calibrating his performance and excising howlers from the script. But, as a colleague remarked, it's almost avant-garde these days to make a film in praise of manual labor and the dignity of a job well done. When *Mac* won the Camera d'Or for the best first feature, I applauded as loudly as anyone.

Among the other films that might open sooner or later in the United States: *Il Ladro di Bambini* (*The Stolen Children*), winner of the Grand Jury Prize, is the new film by Gianni Amelio, best known for his recent *Open Doors*. Taking its place in the great Italian tradition of intelligent tearjerkers, the film tells the story of a young *carabiniere* under orders to escort two children to an orphanage. Of course, the *carabiniere* wanders off with the kids—which is the last predictable thing to happen in this deceptively simple, exquisitely restrained drama.

Terence Davies has followed up his beautiful *Distant Voices, Still Lives* with another non-narrative memory film about his family and neighbors in Liverpool. This time, though, he was determined to give himself a happy childhood. He eliminated his brutal father from the picture; unfortunately, most of the emotional tension went with him. Compared with his previous film, *The Long Day Closes* seems slack at times and unspecific; some of the memories it calls up might belong to anybody. Still, only Davies puts films together this way. His best sequences are nothing short of breathtaking.

Another filmmaker with an utterly distinctive style and subject matter, Vitali Kanievski, won a subsidiary Jury Prize for *An Independent Life*, the follow-up to his *Freeze, Die, Come to Life*. Again, Kanievski dramatizes the coming of age and wanderings of a young man (Pavel Nazarov) in the far east and north of the Soviet Union shortly after World War II. The fog of memory literally drifts across the camera, opening and closing most sequences. On the soundtrack, you hear Kanievski raucously singing all manner of obscene ditties, while the events before your eyes coalesce into a Boschian phantasmagoria of naked bodies, horse cocks

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I do not care where goodness comes from—
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of fame or the raptures of Babylon. I do not care
if the wages of goodness are a pauper's fee

and not even the wind will pause to collect its refuse.
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against the doors of evil until I am black and blue

and deflated as a paper bag. I do not care if
I am called sentimental all my life (or manly or womanly,
or childish or simpleminded). I do not care

if I am not asked to contribute to the anthologies
on the morality of form, and can find no home
for the morality of content. I do not care

if I am excluded from the Valhalla of the seekers
of truth. I don't even care if I have failed
to look into the image of my own poor face

and missed the center of this human world:
the Satanic fires burning in my eyes.

*Michael C. Blumenthal*

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and burning rodents. I have my reservations about the picture; but then, Kanievski seems to have some well-earned reservations about human existence, so I guess we're even.

The sensation of the Critics' Week section of Cannes and winner of an international critics' prize was *C'est arrivé près de chez vous* (also known as *Man Bites Dog*), a Belgian scandal by Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel and Benoît Poelvoorde. Maybe somebody will work up the guts to distribute it in the United States. I hope so, because it's a film that people talk about almost compulsively once they've seen it. Imagine a fake documentary, something like *This is Spinal Tap*. Imagine that its subject is not an English rock band but a professional killer. Imagine that the members of the film crew, already complicit in the crimes as accessories to the fact, become more and more actively engaged in the spree of robbery, rape and murder. Is the film moralizing about the public's fascination with violence, while simultaneously encouraging you to laugh all you like at bloodshed? Probably; but I think *Man Bites Dog* demands to be seen for the very sake of its outrageousness, and for the explosive performance of Benoît Poelvoorde as the very voluble, self-approving killer.

Which brings me to a much tougher film about violence, both as depicted and as experienced—perhaps the one great film I saw at Cannes this year: *Benny's Video*, by the Austrian director Michael Haneke. Set in a relentlessly tasteful and polite upper-middle-class milieu, *Benny's Video* dramatizes the disastrous attempt of a teenage boy to feel some contact with the flesh-and-blood world. The film's style is cold and clipped, almost frighteningly self-controlled—the work of a rigorous materialist. (I'd guess a good 15 percent of the shots are of money changing hands.) The emotional content is devastating. Since *Benny's Video* is a Viennese film, you can of course read it psychoanalytically, as a study in the dynamics of sadism. But Haneke has thought through the film so thoroughly, made it so much of a whole, that you can also read *Benny's Video* as a political parable, as a critique of violence in the mass media or even as a melodrama about a rich boy breaking a poor girl's heart. Are there still audiences willing to face a challenge? Then let them see *Benny's Video*. It won no prizes, but heaven knows, it wasn't asking for any. □

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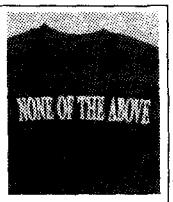


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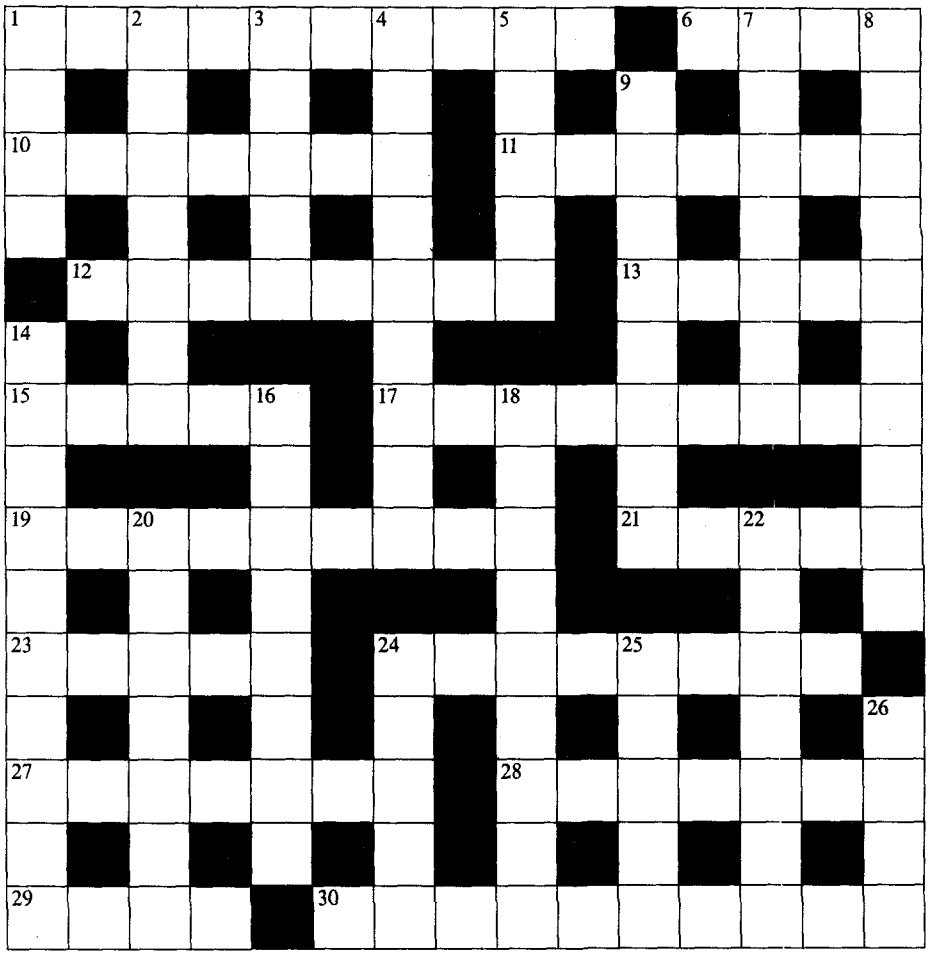
# Crossword Puzzle No. 2388

FRANK W. LEWIS



### ACROSS

1 and 6 Like Earl Grey and a star, one might tell you about different cases. (7,7)
10 An old French coin would start you on a different road, and a different country. (7)
11 Good points for people, but one of them was said to be easy with a naughty girl. (7)
12 Convoluted C.I.A. *roman*, possibly rather cheesy.
13 A number on the rise might get a sensation of cold. (5)
15 In the lab, horrible things to shrink from! (5)
17 Favoring drinking too much? (9)
19 You may not think of a scary word with what goes on pie, by the sound of it, but it should come back to you. (9)
21 If you sit in one, you might get a cold beer, perhaps. (5)
23 Start outdoors, to get the better of someone. (5)
24 Any snore is bad, but these might really bother you! (8)
27 Having a sort of lounge not well turned in lengthy environment. (7)
28 A mild oath preceded what a bad speaker got, perhaps. (7)
29 You might put something this way to get purchase, if you want it held. (4)
30 What one does up to get business sounds like "watch!" (They might be part of the holiday fare, too.) (10)

### DOWN

1 Somewhat poetically, an early night is smooth, though. (4)
2 A ghoul's awful like something you might eat! (7)
3 Where 1 across might come from. (5)
4 Laugh, Ms. Seles, one might need a player! (9)
5 A poetic P.S. made in a broken voice, as one can see. (5)
7 The sort of hound that needs two "eyes," one hears, easily got away a number of times. (7)
8 People who jump the gun at the corner might see old-fashioned illumination. (4,6)
9 What the wood in the fireplace did when the unfortunate dope was in front. (8)
14 Sort of blamed about almost all of the liquor, and got really taken in. (10)
16 The style of language which is perhaps doubly elaborate, or thrice so! (8)
18 and 24 down Follow closely in those things coming before madness, because of what one might call selfish. (3-2-3-6)
20 Not being in when the big bad one comes up could prove an expense! (7)
22 Perhaps used instead of oil, when a good bawl ends up in public without a place to get a beer. (7)
24 See 18
25 One might race for one called America. (5)
26 Does poetry, perhaps? (4)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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